



Pollution Prevention Fact Sheet

Mobile Car Washing - Outdoor Surface Pressure Washing



If you have – or employ – a mobile washing service for vehicles or other outdoor surfaces, you can be a part of the City of Santa Maria's **Pollution Solution** by ensuring the wash water is handled properly.

How can mobile washing businesses cause water pollution?

Disposal of a mobile business' wash water into a storm drain hurts the environment because it enters the storm drain system untreated. The wash water can carry with it harmful cleaning chemicals, oil, grease, heavy metals, and paint. Even soaps, including biodegradable soaps, are pollutants that can harm waterways and wildlife.

Is it possible to responsibly wash cars or other surfaces outdoors?

Yes, if the wash water does not enter a storm drain. Section 8-12.201 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code prohibits discharges of untreated wastewater.

How do I prevent wash water from entering the storm drain system?

If washing vehicles, do so in a place where the natural drainage pattern will route wash water into a vegetated area such as a lawn or planter. Use sand bags, rolled towels, portable berms, hoses, or other tools to divert the surface runoff to the vegetated area. You can also seal off the on-site storm drain with a cover material, collect the water, and use a sump pump to move the water to a vegetated area or containment system for proper disposal at the City's wastewater treatment plant. This second strategy avoids placing the chemicals, oil, grease, paint, or soap onto the ground near the wash area.

How do I seal off a storm drain?

Many parking lots have grated inlets placed in low areas to flow directly to storm sewers. To seal a grated inlet, place a sheet of heavy plastic over the inlet and put weight on the extended areas. Form a tight, waterproof seal that will keep water out of the storm drain. Rolled up towels can be placed around the edge of the mat to increase water tightness. Some parking lots drain through openings in the side of the curbs called catch basins. Catch basins can be sealed off with a sheet of heavy plastic topped with sand bags or other weights. Be aware, though, that sealing storm drains in the street on the *public property* side is not allowed. It can create a traffic and flooding hazard. You must seal the catch basin on the *private property* side of the curb and only with the owner's permission.

Where do I get a sump pump?

You can buy sump pumps at hardware stores or rent them at equipment rental stores. You will also need a hose to carry water from the pump to the vegetated area and an extension cord and source of electricity. A broom is handy to sweep water towards the pump.

If the wash water is allowed to remain on site until it evaporates, can't the residue still create a potential for water pollution?

Yes, rain can wash the residue into the storm drain system where it can then pollute our waterways. It is a good idea to thoroughly rinse down the wash area and properly dispose of the rinse water while the storm drain seals are still in place.

For assistance, call the Utilities Department Regulatory Compliance staff at 805-925-0951, ext. 7270.

To report illegal dumping, call the Storm Water Hotline, 805-925-0951, ext. 7777.