

MOBILE VEHICLE POWER WASHING

Water, detergents, degreasers, and other products are used for mobile power washing. Although solvent degreasers can also be used, this brochure does not cover mobile power washing with solvents. For more information on mobile power washing with solvents, call the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality at 520-628-6733.



Why is mobile power wash discharge a concern?



Mobile power washing, including power washing using water only, creates wash water (wastewater). Washing vehicles and equipment outdoors or in areas where wastewater flows onto surfaces where it cannot soak in, such as in concrete areas, can cause the wastewater to flow into storm drains. Because some storm drain systems discharge untreated water directly to washes, discharging power wash wastewater into this type of storm drain system is the same as discharging wastewater directly into a wash.

Wastewater can contain high concentrations of oil and grease, detergents that may contain phosphates and suspended solids. Phosphates, an ingredient in some detergents, are plant nutrients that can cause the excessive growth of nuisance plants when the phosphates enter washes. Wastewater can also contain dirt and pollutants from vehicles and equipment washing. Power washing also removes debris which, if discharged to a storm drain, can clog storm sewer inlets and grates and reduce or even prevent storm water drainage to the sewer.



What should I do with my mobile power wash discharge?

- **Use a portable containment system or storm sewer manhole insert to catch wastewater from vehicle washing.** Both of these methods use submersible pumps that can pump the wastewater to a sanitary sewer or a holding tank to be hauled off site and properly disposed of.
- **Discharge wastewater to the sanitary sewer.** Wastewater should be filtered before discharge to a sanitary sewer. Residue on the filter can be disposed of along with your general waste when completely dry. Permit authorization to discharge wastewater to the sanitary sewer must be obtained from Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department (RWRD), Industrial Wastewater Control (IWC) [520-443-6200].
- **Discharge wastewater to the sanitary sewer of the property where the cleaning was conducted with permission of the property owner.** The on-site sanitary sewer can be accessed through a building drain, building sewer, industrial sink, private sewer clean-out, private sampling manhole, or any other privately-owned sanitary sewer access point. Discharges to the sewer should not contain grease, grit, or any material that could clog piping. Discharge to the sanitary sewer requires a permit from RWRD-IWC. Call the RWRD-Industrial Wastewater Control [520-443-6200] for information on storm sewers and associated discharge requirements.



TIP: Wastewater belongs to the facility where it is generated; therefore, if the wastewater is not being collected and hauled offsite for proper disposal, the power washer must obtain permission to dispose of the water at the cleaning site. At properly operated car washes, wastewater is pretreated by a sand filter and grease trap before discharge to the local sanitary sewer.



What am I not allowed to do with my mobile power wash discharge?

- **Municipal separate storm sewer system.** Pima County uses a separate storm water conveyance system comprised of roads, roadway shoulders, concrete culverts, and some underground storm drains. If wastewater were to be discharged to the County's storm water conveyance system, the untreated wastewater would be discharged directly to washes. Without treatment to remove pollutants, the wastewater would contaminate and damage the desert environment.
- **Prevent wastewater from discharging to storm sewers.** Vehicles and equipment should be washed in vegetated or gravel areas so that the wastewater can seep into the ground. Do not wash equipment or vehicles outdoors on saturated ground or on days when rain is probable. Items should not be washed over storm sewers, on paved areas, or any area that drains to a storm sewer. Seal storm drains so that wastewater cannot discharge to the drains.



Do I need a permit for my mobile power wash discharge?

Power washing wastewater can be discharged to the sanitary sewer system with permission from the RWRD-IWC. Contact the Industrial Wastewater Control to find out about pertinent requirements. Do not discharge your power washing wastewater to a septic system.

Mobile power washing requirements may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Therefore, it is recommended that you contact the storm water program or department for a given jurisdiction to determine the exact requirements. Permits may be required because power washing can produce dust and potentially hazardous or harmful material.

For More Information:

Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) / 243-7400

City of Tucson / 520-791-4251

Town of Marana / 520-382-1999

Town of Oro Valley / 520-229-5058

City of South Tucson / 520-770-0032

