



Vehicle & Equipment Washing

Pollution Prevention - actionSHEET 2

Washing vehicles and equipment brings contaminants into the waste water that can harm our environment. This sheet will help you to identify whether you could be causing land or water pollution and provides advice for washing vehicles and equipment in a legal and environmentally responsible manner.

How do wash water wastes pollute the environment?

There are many different pollutants associated with wash water wastes, including dirt, oil, fuel residues, metals, paint and cleaners such as acids, solvents, detergents or degreasers.

Whether you use high or low pressure, hot or cold water, with or without cleaning additives, the resulting wastewater must be collected for proper treatment and disposal. If not, it will eventually pollute our land and water by soaking into the

ground or flowing to a natural water body such as a stream, the sea or groundwater. This harms the creatures that live there and reduces everyone's use and enjoyment of the environment.

If your business generates wash water and doesn't dispose of it properly, then you are contributing to the Southland's pollution issues – and breaking the law!

Do I have wash water problems?

Consider where and how your company's vehicles and equipment are cleaned. Are you sure that your wash water wastes are being disposed of properly? Run through this quick checklist:

- Is there a hose, waterblaster or bucket and brush by a doorway?
- Do you occasionally see foamy, dirty water in stormwater drains, or wet, foamy traces or stains on the yard or in gutters, leading towards a stormwater drain or unsealed ground?
- Are there any oily patches on unsealed ground where cleaning residues have accumulated?
- Do staff wash or rinse off dirty parts or machinery outside before starting to work on or re-use them?
- Are any areas of your site sometimes wet when it has not rained recently?
- Is there an area around the site where staff clean their own or company vehicles?
- Do you have a designated, covered wash area that now has some other use?

Options to consider when reviewing your washing activities:

- Always use cleaning or degreasing agents sparingly
- Conserve water when washing – use a trigger hose
- Consider using portable wash equipment such as a suction tube boom or a mini containment pool to collect wastes for proper recycling or disposal
- Tip left over cleaning water down the sink rather than into the gutter – water from the sink goes into the sewerage system, rather than down the drain
- Use cleaning methods that require minimal or no water, or wash items less frequently
- All commercial wash water containing cleaning and / or degreasing agents must be disposed of as a wastewater (trade waste), into the sewer, with the approval of the local council, or via a commercial waste contractor
- Use rainwater for your washing needs and recycle as much water as possible
- Car dealers who wish to keep display vehicles clean on the yard may use cold water with no additives to rinse settled film from vehicle panels and windows, but not engines or undercarriages



If you wash vehicles or equipment and do not have at least one of the following:

- A proper designated wash facility on site
- A contract with a vehicle / equipment cleaning firm
- A formal policy ensuring that all cleaning activities are carried out appropriately

then you are likely to be polluting the environment.

Washdown Areas

Washdown water is the result of cleaning equipment such as vehicles, machinery or containers on your site. It can contain oil, grit, dirt, concrete dust or chemicals. Contaminated washwater must not get into stormwater.

Unless you are disposing of **ALL** washwater from your site either via trade waste permits or resource consents, or in a way that presents no risk of stormwater contamination, consider one of the management options below:

Option 1

Use a dry wash method – anti-static brushes, wet rag / dry rag, bucket and rag – on vehicles, containers and equipment.

Option 2

Take vehicles, containers or equipment to a compliant commercial washing facility with a sewer connection or recirculating system.

Option 3

Dispose of 100% of your wash water to the sewer via an approved connection. Fully bund and roof the wash bay to contain wash water and eliminate stormwater. You may need a trade waste consent or a building permit to do this, so call the city/district council to find out.

Option 4

Recycle 100% of your washwater. Fully bund the washbay to contain washwater and either roof it to eliminate stormwater, or put stormwater into the treatment and storage facility as top-up, with an overflow to direct excess clean runoff into the stormwater system.

Option 5

Recycle most of your washwater and dispose of excess to the sewer via an approved sewer connection or to a holding tank for removal by a certified waste disposal operator. You will still need to fully bund the washbay and either roof it to eliminate stormwater, or use a demand-driven first flush diversion valve to divert the first 10mm of rain to the washwater treatment facility.

Option 6

Collect and treat washwater for disposal to the stormwater system, to natural water, or via irrigation to land in rural areas. You will need a resource consent from Environment Southland and use of detergents, degreasers or chemical additives is unlikely to be allowed.

At Home

If you must wash your car, concrete mixer, mower, wheelbarrow etc, then do so on the lawn so that runoff soaks into the ground, or take it to a commercial wash facility so that all wastes go to the sewer.

Never use solvents or degreasing agents when waste water flows or drips straight onto the ground.



Further information

For a copy of the **Pollution Prevention Guide** or more information on any of these matters, contact Environment Southland 03 211 5115 or 0800 76 88 45 or visit our website at www.es.govt.nz.