



Residential Pollution Prevention **RHP-02 Vehicle Washing**

No Symbol

Symbol



Description

Pollutants, such as detergents and dirty washwater, must always be prevented from directly discharging to streams, creeks, ditches and storm drains. Business and property owners can reduce pollutants from cars, trucks and other personal vehicles in order to protect natural streams and creeks. Every effort should be made to prevent pollutants from running off the land and impervious surfaces due to precipitation and stormwater.

Design

Washing personal vehicles (cars, trucks, vans, motorcycles, etc.) has a high potential for polluting streets, storm drains, streams, creeks, wetlands and other natural water bodies. Vehicles accumulate the various products and emissions generated by gasoline and diesel fuel combustion (particularly in the engine area and underneath the frame). The waste products from these vehicles include:

- Fluids that leak slowly from the engine, or may escape from a rupture, or spill during a vehicle collision, such as engine oil, transmission fluid, radiator coolant, battery acids, and brake fluid all have special properties due to their chemical formulation. All of these fluids are toxic to plants and wildlife.
- The moving parts of vehicles that typically wear down, such as pieces of worn tire, brakes and brake pads that erode and grind in a way to minimize vehicle maintenance, and especially those that containing asbestos and metals.

Detergents and cleaning substances are toxic to aquatic life. Reduce or eliminate the use of detergents and cleaners while washing vehicles. Wash vehicles on lawns or grassy areas to reduce direct discharge of washwater to curbs, inlets, ditches and other waterways.



Prohibition to Discharge

Due to federal mandates, the City of Bowling Green has adopted a Stormwater and Street Ordinance to prohibit discharge of chemicals and manmade materials into creeks, streams, ditches, swales, pipes, storm drains, and parts of the city drainage system. See the BMP entitled RHP-01, Non-Stormwater Discharges to Storm Drains, for a complete list of allowable discharges; anything else is strictly prohibited. This prohibition includes all types of automotive fluids, whether discharged directly into a stream or storm drain, or discharged indirectly upon the ground surface. In addition to fines and legal action from the City of Bowling Green, the state government Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) can also assess penalties for polluting waters of the state (defined as any blue-line stream on a USGS quadrangle topographic map) or any storm drainage system that leads to waters of the state.

Vehicle Washing

It is legal to discharge water when washing individual cars on residential property. This is one of the allowable discharges listed in RHP-01 (Non-Stormwater Discharges to Storm Drains) and in the Bowling Green Stormwater and Street Ordinance. It is also legal to discharge water when holding a carwash event over a period of two days or less, for the purpose of charity, nonprofit fundraising, or similar noncommercial purpose. However, it is illegal to discharge washwater or rinsewater that adversely affects the water quality of a creek or stream, even if otherwise allowable according to ordinance.

Residents should attempt to minimize the amount of detergents that are used in wash-water. Extremely dirty or grimy vehicles should generally be cleaned at a commercial carwash, which is required to treat all washwater and rinsewater to certain standards.

A carwash or commercial vehicle washing facility is strictly prohibited from discharging water into streams, creeks, ditches, pipes, culverts or storm drains. This includes, but is not limited to: automobile dealers, automotive repair shops, industrial or commercial plants with vehicle washing stations, construction sites, or any location that is not a personal residence.

City and County residents may want to wash vehicles on lawns or other pervious ground surfaces, or at least direct the discharge of washwater and rinsewater into grassy areas. Avoid discharging large amounts of chlorinated city water directly to storm drains or streams. Reduce the amount of chlorinated water by turning off the hose when not needed. Relatively small amounts of chlorinated water can be toxic to the fish and other aquatic organisms, especially during dry weather.

Detergents affect the gill membranes of fish and adversely affect other aquatic life. Minimize the use of detergents, and dispose of soapy water indoors in a sink or drain. Even phosphate-free, biodegradable soaps have been shown to be toxic to fish before the soap degrades. Avoid the use of solvents and other toxic chemicals.

Do not wash engines, undercarriages, transmissions or automotive parts near streams, creeks, storm drains, ditches, or impervious surfaces such as driveways and streets. Carefully control and dispose of engine washwater in a manner that does not pollute Bowling Green streams or the environment. Dirty engines and undercarriages should generally be cleaned at well-equipped commercial facilities to prevent pollution.



Related BMPs Consult the following list of related BMPs for disposal options and other guidance:

- GHP-11 Vehicle and Equipment Washing
- RHP-01 Non-Stormwater Discharges to Storm Drains
- RHP-03 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair