

VEHICLE & EQUIPMENT WASH WATER



In Washington County, what goes down the storm drain goes to the river. Clean rainwater belongs in the stormwater system. Everything else belongs in the sanitary sewer system, including the water businesses use to wash or steam clean vehicles and equipment. By participating in the Wash Water Program, businesses ensure that their used water travels through the sanitary sewers and gets cleaned at a wastewater treatment plant before being returned to the Tualatin River.

Best Management Practices Protect Public Health

Vehicle and equipment wash water may contain pollutants, including gasoline and other toxic hydrocarbons, oils and greases, phosphates, suspended solids and heavy metals. Even biodegradable soap can pose problems when discharged to the storm water system.

To help prevent pollutants from reaching streams, rivers and lakes, DEQ generally requires vehicle and equipment washing operations to discharge wash water to the sanitary sewer system. In Washington County, that means obtaining a Clean Water Services Wash Water Permit and meeting Clean Water Services wash pad requirements, or applying for a separate NPDES permit from DEQ.

Clean Water Services' Wash Water Program applies to your business if you wash or steam clean vehicles or other equipment, such as buses, rental cars, autos, golf carts, riding mowers, forklifts, and large excavation and construction equipment.

Your Wash Water Permit: Step by Step

- Obtain a permit application from CWS Source Control during their inspection of your facility.
- Submit the application within 30 days.
- Pay the \$100 fee when invoiced.
- Source Control staff will review your application in a timely manner and notify you if approval has been granted to construct or retrofit your wash pad.
- After being notified of approval, construct or retrofit your wash water discharge system and begin using it within 90 days.

The permit term is five years. As a permit holder, you will be required to document maintenance performed on your wash pad and associated systems, and retain all maintenance records for three years.



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How to Manage Wash Water

If your businesses washes with heated water, detergents or other cleansers, or washes/rinses the engine compartment or the underside of vehicles, you need to apply for a Wash Water Permit and take the following steps:

1. Designate and pave an area to wash all vehicles. Wash area must be well marked with signs indicating where and how washing is done. Engine maintenance, including oil changes, cannot be conducted in the wash area.
2. Equip the wash area to discharge used water into the sanitary sewer as follows:

Type of Cleaning	Required Process Before Discharging to Sanitary Sewer
Soap & cold water cleaning of car exteriors	Lynch-style catch basin
Cold water (no soap) cleaning of more than 8 non-construction vehicles a week.	Lynch-style catch basin
Car detailing	Lynch-style catch basin
Hot water (with or without soap) cleaning of car exteriors	Oil-water separator
Steam cleaning of engines and/or equipment	Oil-water separator
Cleaning of large excavation or construction equipment	Sediment basin (vault), then oil-water separator

Note that a business can use cold water (no soap, no heat) to wash up to eight non-construction vehicles, including truck beds, each week and discharge to the stormwater system without performing any wash water control best management practices.

3. Minimize the amount of clean rainwater that flows off the wash pad and into the sanitary sewer system.
 - Some businesses meet this requirement by covering the wash pad. Check local building codes and obtain the proper permits obtained prior to building a structure of this type.
 - Other businesses install a manual or pressure-activated valving system that directs wash water to the sanitary system during washing, and directs rainwater to the stormwater system when the wash pad is not in use.

The alternative to setting up your own wash pad and getting a permit is to take the vehicles to a commercial car wash or hire a a mobile washer with their own permit to wash the vehicles, capture the wash water, and take it off-site to discharge it via their own permit.

February 2018

Technical Assistance is Available

The Source Control group at Clean Water Services works closely with businesses in our service area and is readily available for technical support. Our staff of wastewater and stormwater experts will work with you to achieve mutual goals of safe industrial wastewater disposal. Please contact us with questions about:

- Choosing the right system for your business
- Policies and procedures
- Disposal options
- Pollution prevention opportunities

If you are planning a new facility or working on a retrofit, we may be able to save you some redesign time if you contact us first.



Resources

- Apply for a Wash Water Permit: [cleanwaterservices.org/media/1796/wash-water-application.pdf](https://www.cleanwaterservices.org/media/1796/wash-water-application.pdf)
- Learn about inspections and permitting for new industrial development: [cleanwaterservices.org/for-business-industry](https://www.cleanwaterservices.org/for-business-industry)

Everything we do at Clean Water Services aims to protect public health while enhancing the natural environment of the Tualatin River Watershed.

 Clean Water Services

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