



# Pressure Washing

Protect waterways while cleaning up

Chemicals include phosphates, particulates, oil, fertilizer, heavy metals and paint chips

**P**olluted runoff is the one of the most common threats to local waterways. As water flows over streets, driveways, lawns, and sidewalks, it can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants that empty into the storm drain system or directly to a lake, stream, river, or wetland. Storm drains carry run-off—untreated—into waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and drinking water and can have adverse effects on plants, fish, animals, and people.



Pollutants entering an unprotected storm drain are carried directly to local waterways.

As pressure washers have become more affordable, pressure washing has gained in popularity as a common cleaning method. Pressure washing surfaces such as driveways and houses can release oil and grease, pesticides, paints, solvents, toxic chemicals and contaminants into our storm drains, even if there's no stream or river directly in sight. Less obvious problems are changes to surface water and groundwater. Heat can raise the temperature of the water, dirt can make the water turbid, and soaps (even biodegradable ones) can cause low oxygen levels in the water.

## How pollutants harm water quality

Sediment can cloud the water and make it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow. Sediment also can destroy aquatic habitats.

- Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.

- Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards.
- Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life. Land animals and people can become sick or die from eating diseased fish and shellfish or ingesting polluted water.

- Polluted water often affects drinking water sources. This, in turn, can affect human health and increase drinking water treatment costs.

## Regulations

Polluted discharges from any property that enter the local storm drain systems in Eugene, Springfield, or Lane County are considered an illicit discharge violation. It is the property owner's responsibility to keep pollutants from cleaning activities from entering the storm drain system, even if someone else is hired to do the work.



Following best management practices (BMPs) and protecting storm drains will help keep pollutants out of local waterways. See the back of this sheet for more details.

# Prevent pollution with these best management practices

To prevent polluted discharges from leaving your property, it is best to use BMPs, or best management practices. BMPs are simple steps that you or someone you hire can follow to keep common pollutants like pesticides, sediment, pet waste, grass clippings, and automotive fluids off the street and out of stormwater system.

Here are some BMPs and pollution prevention practices to use at your home or business:

## For sidewalk and driveway cleaning:

- Start with dry cleanup methods first, such as sweeping up, vacuuming or blowing into piles for pick up and disposal in the trash system. Do not use a hose to rinse off surfaces allowing washwater to enter the street or stormwater system.

- Use dry absorbents (cat litter) to clean up oily spots and other fluids.

- Block gutters or storm drains to keep out pollutants. Select the right product to prevent pollution. There are different products used to capture particles (sediment, paint chips) and petroleum products. If possible, direct runoff to a lawn or landscaped area.

- Do not use soaps or household cleansers.

## Paved parking areas and drive-throughs:

- Start with same first 3 steps above.

- Hire a professional street sweeper to cover large surface areas quickly.

- Collect water and pump to the sanitary sewer. See below for details about discharging wastewater to the sanitary sewer system.

## Building surfaces, wood decks, etc.:

- Start with same first three steps for sidewalks and driveways.

- An often overlooked way to ease clean up and capture pollutants from building cleaning is to use tarps to collect debris. Dispose of debris properly into trash disposal system. Collect water and pump to the sanitary sewer. See below for details about discharging wastewater to the sanitary sewer system.

## Vehicle pressure washing:

- Start with the first three steps in the sidewalks and driveways section of this sheet.

- Businesses that wash less than eight vehicles per week are permitted provided NO chemicals, soaps, detergents, steam or hot water are used if runoff from site flows to a storm drain.

- Businesses exceeding above standards need to apply for a DEQ Wash Water Permit from the City of Eugene Wastewater program or the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

- Vehicle washing by private citizens is permitted. Biodegradable phosphate-free cleaners are recommended and should be used sparingly.

- Non-profit fund-raising groups are permitted once a month and should use Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's Recommended BMPs for washing activities (Call 541-686-7838).

- Cleaning is restricted to exterior of vehicle only and never allowed for engines, transmissions or undercarriages.

Some advance planning can keep many common pollutants out of the stormwater system



For more information about BMPs and pollution prevention for pressure washing activities or stormwater regulations contact the following:

Stormwater Regulations for the City of Eugene 541-682-4929

Stormwater Regulations for the City of Springfield 541-726-3694

Permission to discharge to the wastewater system in Eugene 541-682-8600

Permission to discharge to the wastewater system in Springfield 541-726-3675



## For general stormwater information:

Public Works, Stormwater Management Program

In person: 101 E. Broadway, Suite 400, Eugene, OR 97401

541-682-2739 [eugene-or.gov/happyrivers](http://eugene-or.gov/happyrivers)