



# Stormwater Management

# Fact Sheet

## Commercial Vehicle & Equipment Wash Regulations

Wash water from vehicle/equipment cleaning activities may contain significant quantities of oil and grease, suspended solids, heavy metals, organics, and detergents that can flow into storm drains and end up untreated in local lakes, rivers, and streams. These pollutants can be toxic to living organisms, including fish and people who ingest them, and have the potential to destroy sensitive ecosystems, harm aquatic life and habitats, and pollute recreational sites and our water supplies. State and local regulations prohibit the discharge of contaminated or polluted water to the storm drainage system. Violators can be heavily penalized with fines and prohibited from doing business in Cobb County.

**BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs)** are proactive, practical, easily implemented techniques that reduce pollution at the source before they end up in our environment. By implementing BMPs, you will protect and improve local water quality, save money on disposal costs, be better able to comply with existing regulations, and offer environmentally-friendly services to your customers.

### What Types of Operations Are Covered By This Document?

Engine cleaning and cleaning operations that use acids, caustics, or other metal brighteners must follow the BMPs for discharges to the Cobb County sanitary system or use closed-loop water recycling systems.

- businesses that regularly wash vehicle/equipment exterior surfaces
- at-site rinsing of farm and construction vehicle/equipment
- mobile washers
- washing vehicle exteriors at new and used car/truck dealerships



### Wash Water Discharge Options:

There are four options available for the management of discharged vehicle & equipment wash water.

#### ZERO DISCHARGE OR CLOSED-LOOP WATER RECYCLING SYSTEMS (PREFERRED OPTION)

A closed-loop system uses recycled water and has zero discharge. This is the preferred option and is intended for permanent carwash facilities. Closed-loop water recycling systems may use chemicals to help remove solids from the waste, generating chemical sludge which must be handled safely and disposed of properly. The closed-loop recycling systems may also have a reservoir to store the recycled water for reuse. It may be necessary to discard this reservoir water periodically as oil, grease, and other pollutants accumulate.

#### DISCHARGE TO COBB COUNTY SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

Discharges to Cobb County sanitary sewer system receive treatment by the municipal treatment facility before the wash water is finally discharged to the environment (rivers, lakes, or the land). This option is intended for permanent carwash facilities that do not have the closed loop recycling system. Dischargers must obtain approval from the Cobb County Water System prior to discharge. Local sewer limits on pollutant concentrations protect water quality, prevent operational problems at the sewage treatment plant and in the collection system, and protect worker health and safety.

#### WASH WATER RECAPTURE SYSTEMS & PROPER DISPOSAL

This option ensures that commercial carwash businesses (e.g. mobile detailers) that do not have the financial resources to put in place a recycling system or tie into the Cobb County sanitary sewer system have the appropriate control measures in place to prevent wash water from entering the stormwater drainage system. This option also requires that the business is diligent in ensuring that the recapture system setup is functioning properly and that the collected wash water is disposed of properly. Any sediment or residue left on paved surfaces from car wash operations must be cleaned up and disposed of properly.

#### DISCHARGES TO THE GROUND WITH VEGETATIVE COVER

A grassy ground surface can provide treatment for small and infrequent discharges. This option is intended for infrequent carwashes like a charity carwash. Mobile washers who don't have the means to recapture wash water generated from cleanup operations must at minimum use this option. There is much preparation in determining if this option is feasible. You must allow for the wash water discharge to flow over a minimum of 50 feet of vegetative ground cover before any wash water discharges can enter the storm drainage system or the nearest stream.

If you have any questions about the requirements for pressure washing please feel free to contact the Water Quality Section of the Cobb County Stormwater Management Division: (770) 419-6435.

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