Acceptable Practices for Disposal of Wash Water from Pressure Washing, Vehicle Detailing and Other Surface Cleaning Operations

This table is prepared as a supplement to the guidance publication, "Best Management Practices for Pressure Washers, Vehicle Detailers and Other Surface Cleaning Operations." Please refer to that publication for additional guidance and details about how to properly contain and dispose of wash water generated from your washing activities.

NOTE (1) for Discharges to Storm Drain – For discharges to the storm drain indicated by a "YES" and "see Note 1" below, an effort must be made to pre-clean the area to be washed by removing oil, spilled products and other debris. Wash water must be filtered through fine mesh screens, absorbents and/or other materials to remove oil/grease, sediment and debris. Also, no oil sheen may be present as the water enters a storm drain.

NOTE (2) for Discharges to Sanitary Sewer – For discharges to the sanitary sewer indicated by a "YES" or "MAYBE" below, up to 100 gallons per day are allowed to be discharged without prior approval; however, filtering to remove pollutants is highly encouraged. Volumes above 100 gallons but below 1000 gallons may be discharged without prior approval or permitting, but must be pre-treated to remove oil/grease and solids. All other discharges are either not allowed or prior approval must be obtained from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities at (704) 336-4407. Discharges to the sanitary sewer must be in compliance with local regulations and limits, and may require pre-treatment, sampling, permitting and/or other measures.

NOTE (3) for Discharges to Landscaped Areas – Discharges to landscaped areas are allowed in certain cases, such as when the surface being washed is surrounded by landscaping and the water naturally runs into it. Water from washing 1 vehicle at a certain location may also be discharged into landscaped areas. All other discharges must be handled differently.

Washing Activity	Washing Conditions	Discharge Options				*Special Notes
		Storm Drain	Sanitary Sewer (2)	Landscaped Area (3)	Environmental Waste Company	
*Vehicle washing & rinsing at residence	To remove mainly dirt with or without soap	YES	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	*When possible, avoid direct discharges to the storm drain system and use biodegradable, non-toxic products.
House and residential driveway pressure washing	To remove dirt and plant growth; no soap or chemicals are used	YES (see Note 1)	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	
*House and residential driveway pressure washing	To remove dirt and plant growth; soap or chemicals are used	NO	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	*When possible, use biodegradable, non-toxic products.
*Mobile commercial vehicle washing and detailing; vehicle washing at sales lots	To remove mainly dirt with soap; no engine or undercarriage cleaning	NO (see Special Note)	YES (see Note 2)	YES - (see Note 3)	YES	*Mobile vehicle detailers who wash one vehicle per location may discharge to a storm drain or landscaping. If washing more than one vehicle at a location, then discharge to a storm drain or landscaping is not allowed.
Mobile fleet/truck washing and detailing	To remove dirt/grime with or without soap; no engine or undercarriage cleaning	NO	MAYBE (see Note 2)	NO	YES	
Vehicle rinsing of fleets (e.g., at car sales lots)	To remove dirt only; no soap or cleaners used	YES (see Note 1)	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	
*Engine/Equipment Degreasing	To remove oil/grease buildup; with or without soap or chemicals	NO	NO	NO	YES	*Cleaning and degreasing of engines generates heavily polluted water, so disposal through an environmental waste company is required.
*Restaurant back areas, grease bins, drive-throughs and dumpsters; mobile food carts; kitchen exhausts/hood vents	To remove grease, dirt and food build-up; with or without soap or chemicals	NO	MAYBE (see Note 2)	NO	YES	*Discharge to sanitary sewer MUST go through a grease interceptor. Also, solids must be filtered out or removed through a grit settling chamber. To minimize pollution in wash water, use dry methods to remove grease, food and other debris as much as possible before washing.
Parking lots, parking decks, fuel islands and gas stations	To remove dirt, oil and other stains; with or without chemical additives	NO	MAYBE (see Note 2)	NO	YES	
Pressure washing of sidewalks and plazas	To remove dirt, plant growth and light stains; no soap or chemicals are used	YES (see Note 1)	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	

Washing Activity	Washing Conditions	Discharge Options				*Special Notes
		Storm Drain	Sanitary Sewer (2)	Landscaped Area (3)	Environmental Waste Company	
Pressure washing of sidewalks and plazas	Significant oily deposits present and/or soap or chemical additives are used	NO	MAYBE (see Note 2)	NO	YES	
Pressure washing of building exteriors, walls, fences, glass and structures	To remove dirt and plant growth; no soap or chemicals are used	YES (see Note 1)	YES (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	
Pressure washing of building exteriors, walls, fences, glass and structures	To remove dirt and plant growth; soap or chemicals are used	NO	MAYBE (see Note 2)	YES (see Note 3)	YES	
*Pressure washing of building exteriors, walls, fences and structures	To remove paint; with or without soap or chemicals	NO	NO	YES (see Note 3)	YES	*Wash water containing lead or mercury-based paint (typically prior to 1979) may be a hazardous waste and should be handled accordingly. Care should be taken to collect paint chips dislodged while pressure washing, especially if the paint has lead or mercury in it. Use of a canvas tarp or filter fabric laid on the ground below the structure being washed may help accomplish this task.
*Masonry acid washing	To remove mineral deposits	NO	NO	YES (see Note 3)	YES	*In keeping with the policy about discharges to landscaped areas, wash water that naturally drains into landscaping while doing masonry acid washing is allowed; however, be aware that the acidity may harm plants.