

Power Washing Without Pollution



When rainwater travels over our driveways, roads and parking lots, the water picks up chemicals, metals, sediment and oils and conveys them to our creeks, rivers and the ocean. This pollution harms fish and other marine species. By reducing pollution in our watersheds we can enjoy clean, healthy, natural spaces.

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Power washing can cause pollution in a number of ways. Wash water from outside power washing activities may flow into storm drains and end up untreated in nearby waterways. Power washing can dislodge pollutants like paint chips or oily sediments. Chemical cleaning residues and soaps that flow in the storm drain system have the potential to harm aquatic life and habitats. Roof cleaning can release fine aggregate or even toxic materials that may end up in our environment. All of these chemicals can destroy sensitive ecosystems. By using best management practices for power washing, we can help to prevent pollution and protect water quality and our environment.



Power Washing Preparation

- Plan ahead. Consider if it is necessary to powerwash, or if sweeping or scrubbing will do.
- Sweep before wet washing. Use absorbents on small oil spots and sweep up trash or dirt first before washing.
- Decide what cleaning compounds, if any, to use. Use the least toxic products.
- Always identify the locations of all storm drains and sanitary sewers before commencing work. Protect storm drains with berms or booms.
- Always minimize the amount of water used during power washing.



For More Information:

CRD Hotline
250.360.3030
hotline@crd.bc.ca

CRD Stormwater, Harbours
and Watersheds Program
250.360.3256
stormwater@crd.bc.ca
www.crd.bc.ca/watersheds

Regional Source Control Program
250.360.3256
rscp@crd.bc.ca

Provincial Emergency Program (PEP)
1-800-663-3456

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Type of Surface	Cleaning Option	Proper Disposal
Unpainted Building Surfaces	Plain water	Direct wash water to landscaped area
	Water with non-hazardous cleaning solution	Collect and discharge the wash water to the sanitary sewer
	Acid wash (to remove mineral deposits)	Rinse acid wash with alkaline soap before discharging it to the sanitary sewer
Painted Surfaces	Plain water	Filter out any paint chips or flakes, and then direct wash water to landscaped area
	Water with non-hazardous cleaning solution	Filter out any paint chips or flakes, and then collect and discharge the wash water to the sanitary sewer
Uncontaminated Outside Ground Surfaces (sidewalks, parking lots, storage areas, outdoor eating areas)	Sweep	Dry materials can be put into the garbage
	Plain water	Dispose of solid materials in the garbage. Filtered wash water can be directed to a landscaped area or storm drain
	Water with non-hazardous cleaning solution	Collect the wash water and discharge to the sanitary sewer
Roofing (treated wood shingles)	Sweep/dry clean up only	Treated wood shingles contain a toxic material to reduce moss growth. Never wash treated shingles. Use dry clean-up methods and dispose of loose materials in the garbage

Proper Disposal

- Materials from regular dry clean-up methods involving sweeping, scraping or wire brushing can be put into the garbage.
- Plain wash water (containing no soap, cleaning products or chemicals) that is used on surfaces free of paints, garbage, oil and other hazardous materials may be directed to a landscaped area or may be filtered and discharged to the storm drain.
- Wash water containing soap and non-hazardous cleaning products used on surfaces free of paints, garbage, oil and other hazardous materials has to be collected and disposed of in the sanitary sewer.
- Wash water with caustic cleaning chemicals has to be neutralized before being discharged to the sanitary sewer.
- Contact the CRD Hotline at **250.360.3030** or **hotline@crd.bc.ca** for waste and wastewater management options.

Storm Drains vs. Sanitary Sewers

Storm drains and sanitary sewers are separate systems with different functions.



Storm drains are typically found in streets and parking lots to collect stormwater. Stormwater is surface water that includes water from rain, snowmelt and irrigation. The water runs across rooftops, lawns, pavement and other surfaces into storm drains, or seeps directly into the ground. Along its journey the water picks up contaminants like litter, fluid leaks from cars, pesticides used on lawns, and spilled paints or solvents. Most stormwater ends up untreated in our nearby water bodies.

Sanitary sewers collect wastewater from indoor plumbing such as toilets, sinks, washing machines and floor drains. They are called “sanitary because they keep sewage contained in underground pipes. The sewage flows to a treatment plant before it is discharged to the ocean.