

Mobile Cleaning – Surface Cleaning



Photo Credit: Geoff Brosseau

Description

This category includes businesses that both conduct their own mobile cleaning or “power washing” activities and those that are hired as contractors to conduct these activities. Mobile cleaning differs from other cleaning activities in that the cleaning is not conducted in a dedicated, fixed location with a wastewater capture and treatment system connected to the sanitary sewer system. This category includes mobile cleaning or power washing of flat surfaces:

- Sidewalks and plazas
- Parking areas, driveways, and drive-throughs
- Restaurant / food handling cleaning and storage areas
- Building exteriors, roofs, and decks
- Painted surfaces being cleaned to remove paint or graffiti
- Graffiti removal

Information specific to: transportation-related cleaning, food service business-related cleaning, or cleaning of amenities is provided in other guide sheets.

Pollutant Sources

The following are sources of pollutants:

- Using harmful cleaning chemicals – including soaps as well as solvents
- Removing toxic materials such as oil, antifreeze, and grease from parking lots, sidewalks, and other surfaces
- Generating polluted wash water from activities such as wet sand blasting of buildings to remove paint

Pollutants can include:

- Heavy metals (copper, lead, and zinc)



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- Oils and greases
- Trash
- Sediment
- Toxic organic compounds

Highly polluted sites can generate hazardous waste including:

- Oil-saturated absorbents (but not oil-saturated rags, which can be cleaned at an industrial laundry)
- Wash water that contains lead paint chips
- Solvent cleaners

Approach

The potential for generating stormwater pollution as part of these activities requires extra attention because by definition these activities are conducted outside with water (and sometimes chemicals) for the purpose of removing residues, dirt, and debris. Make stormwater pollution prevention BMPs a part of standard operating procedures and the employee training program. Provide employee education materials in the first language of employees, as necessary.

Use the following four-step approach:

1. Do dry cleanup before washing down
2. Wash without soaps and solvents
3. Keep polluted water out of storm drains
4. Dispose of wastewater correctly and legally

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Source Control BMPs

The best management practices are listed by activity or area.

Type of Surface	Cleaning Method	Proper Disposal
Sidewalks, plazas	Dry cleanup first, wash without soap.	Screen wash water, if needed, to catch debris then discharge to landscaping, or to a gutter, street, or storm drain.
<i>Sidewalks, plazas</i>	<i>Block the storm drain or contain runoff. Dry cleanup, then wash with soap.</i>	<i>Discharge to landscaping or collect water and pump to the sewer.</i>
Parking areas, driveways, drive-throughs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Block the storm drain or contain runoff. 2. Use absorbents to pick up oil; then dry sweep. 3. Clean with or without soap. 	Collect water and pump to the sewer. <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i>
Restaurant/food handling dumpster areas, grease storage	Block the storm drain or contain runoff. Dry cleanup.	If you must use water after sweeping/using absorbents, collect water and pump to the sewer. <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i>
Building surfaces, decks, etc., without loose paint	Use high-pressure water, no soap.	Screen wash water, if needed, to catch debris then discharge to landscaping, or to a gutter, street, or storm drain.
Unpainted building surfaces, wood decks, etc.	Block the storm drain or contain runoff. Use soap or acid wash to remove deposits, wood restorer, or other chemicals.	Make sure pH is between 6 and 10 then discharge to landscaping or collect wash water in a tank and pump to the sewer. <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i>
Painted surfaces being cleaned to remove paint or graffiti	Block the storm drain or contain runoff. Use any cleaning method.	Collect wash water in a tank and pump to the sewer, or dispose as hazardous waste, as appropriate. <i>Call the local wastewater authority or the state Department of Toxic Substances Control (510-540-3732) for help in determining whether the paint contains toxic pollutants such as lead, mercury, or tri-butyl tin; or if the solvent cleaners you use are hazardous.</i>
Graffiti removal	Block the storm drain or contain runoff. Wet sand-blast.	Direct all runoff to a landscaped or unpaved area or follow instructions above for painted surfaces.

Treatment Control BMPs

The use of self-contained, mobile wastewater collection/treatment units may be appropriate and cost-effective for some mobile cleaning activities.

More Information

Booklets, checklists, fact sheets, and pamphlets

Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group, 1995. Outdoor Cleaning - Where does the Water go? Guidelines for disposal of wash water from outdoor cleaning projects:

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Sidewalk/plaza/parking lot cleaning, Vehicle cleaning/detailing, Building exterior cleaning, Waterproofing, Equipment cleaning/degreasing.

Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA), 1996. Pollution from Surface Cleaning – Flat Work, Sidewalks, Plazas, Building exteriors, Parking areas, Drive-thrus.

Fairfield-Suisun Urban Runoff Management Program, 1999. Stormwater Pollution Prevention Practices for Mobile Cleaning Activities, Guidance for Mobile Washers Who Clean Buildings Exteriors, Flat Work, Sidewalks, Drive-Thrus, Plazas, Parking Areas or Who Perform Fleet Washing, Auto Detailing, Carpet Cleaning, or Food-Related Cleaning Activities.

San Francisco Bay Area CETA (Cleaning Equipment Trade Association), 1995. Mobile Cleaner Best Management Practices for Wastewater Runoff.

Videos

BASMAA, 2000. We Do the Job Right! Preventing Pollution from Surface Cleaning (English and Spanish).

References

Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group, 1995. Outdoor Cleaning - Where does the Water go? Guidelines for disposal of wash water from outdoor cleaning projects:
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City of Santa Rosa, 2001. A Clean Water Guide for the Cleaning Industry – Surface Cleaner/Mobile Washer Guidelines.

Fairfield-Suisun Urban Runoff Management Program, 1999. Stormwater Pollution Prevention Practices for Mobile Cleaning Activities, Guidance for Mobile Washers Who Clean Buildings Exteriors, Flat Work, Sidewalks, Drive-Thrus, Plazas, Parking Areas or Who Perform Fleet Washing, Auto Detailing, Carpet Cleaning, or Food-Related Cleaning Activities.

King County Surface Water Management Division, 1995. Stormwater Pollution Control Manual. Best Management Practices for Businesses.
(<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/dss/spcm.htm>)

San Francisco Bay Area CETA (Cleaning Equipment Trade Association), 1995. Mobile Cleaner Best Management Practices for Wastewater Runoff.

Washington State Department of Ecology, 2001. Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington, Volume IV – Source Control BMPs.
(<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/index.html>)