



Best Management Practices: Mobile Pressure Washers

Mobile pressure washing companies are a good option for businesses that require periodic cleaning of vehicles, equipment, buildings and parking lots. By subcontracting with a company that specializes in pressure washing, a business can avoid hiring employees and purchasing and maintaining equipment for this purpose. It's very important, for both pressure washing companies and the businesses that hire them, that all appropriate measures are employed to insure that washing activities do not result in the pollution of stormwater. Businesses that employ mobile pressure washing services are ultimately responsible for any pollution that occurs as a result of their own activities or those of their subcontractor. There are a variety of practices that mobile pressure washing companies, and the businesses that use their services, can implement to prevent pollution.

Washing Vehicles & Equipment

When vehicles are washed, the wash water should be contained through the use of wash pads and temporary seals over storm drains. Some businesses install permanent wash stations with no outlets to storm drains. Wash water should only be disposed of in the sanitary sewer; however there are limits, to the amount and kinds of pollutants that can be sent to the public sewer system.

If solvents are used for washing engines or undercarriages of vehicles, disposal requirements for hazardous waste are likely to apply to the wash water. Even if solvents have not been used to clean the engine, the wash water will likely become contaminated with oil, grease or other materials from the vehicle. If this is the case, then the wash water will need to be contained and treated before it's discharged to the sanitary sewer.

Seattle Public Utilities offers the use of "sump and pump" kits which collect soapy water at an inlet and pump it to a sanitary sewer. You can borrow the pump, catch basin insert, hose and extension cord for free. These kits won't work at every site. Call (206) 684-7599 for more information.

Cleaning Pavement

Mobile pressure washing companies are often employed for cleaning sidewalks, driveways and parking lots. Before these areas are cleaned, storm drains should be sealed off, the area should be thoroughly swept and any debris should be collected and put in the garbage. Oil spots must be cleaned-up with absorbents and wash water used for paved surface cleaning must be discharged to the sanitary sewer. If oil is present in the wash water, it should first be treated by passing it through a proper oil/water separator.

Washing Buildings

When mobile pressure washing companies are hired to clean buildings, the wash water must be disposed of on-site and to the sanitary sewer only. If the wash water contains non-hazardous paint chips, the wash water should first be collected and filtered. The paint chips and filters should then be thrown in the garbage. If an acid wash is used to clean masonry surfaces, the surrounding area must be prepared so that solid particles and the wash water are completely contained. Solids and grit should be filtered out and thrown in the garbage. The filtered, acidic wash water should be disposed of in the sanitary sewer and then flushed down with ample tap water to dilute the acid.

Cleaning Restaurants & Retail Stores

Restaurants and other retail businesses often use mobile pressure washing companies for the cleaning of alleys, parking lots and dumpsters. It's important that all debris is swept up and put in the garbage before cleaning and that the wash water only flows to the sanitary sewer system. When things like floor mats and grocery carts are cleaned outside, all debris should be brushed or vacuumed off before cleaning. Again, any nearby storm drains must be sealed off and the wash water must only be sent to the sanitary sewer.

At Your Service

The Resource Venture provides free environmental consulting services to Seattle-area businesses. We help companies lower their utility costs, obtain rebates, comply with regulations and receive public recognition, all while protecting the environment. Since 1990, the Resource Venture has helped thousands of businesses recycle, use less water, prevent stormwater pollution and build sustainably. We are a program of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Seattle Public Utilities.

Where to Get More Information

■ Resource Venture

(206) 389-7304 / help@resourceventure.org

If you have additional questions about mobile pressure washing, give us a call. If appropriate, a Resource Venture representative can visit your facility and perform, at no charge, an extensive review of your stormwater pollution prevention practices. The representative will then provide recommendations on complying with local and state codes and regulations.

■ Water Quality Investigator

(206) 684-7666

A City staff member will answer questions about how to keep pollutants out of the drainage system. Ask for a member of the surface water quality team.

■ King County Industrial Waste

(206) 689-3000

A King County staff member will provide information regarding limits on what can go down the sanitary sewer and combined sewer/drainage systems.

■ Seattle Street Use Permit Counter

(206) 684-5283

A City staff member will help you determine whether the outdoor drains on your property lead to the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system or a combined system.



www.resourceventure.org / (206) 389-7304