

Stormwater Management BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES



Building Power Washing

Building power washing, using a high-pressure water system, generates wash water (wastewater), which could contain contaminants (such as detergents, oils, dirt, greases, paint chips, metals, and grime). The discharge of these contaminants into a storm drain is considered an “Illicit Discharge.” No wastewater should be discharged into storm drains.

Detergents, even biodegradable ones, can be poisonous to fish. Phosphates, an ingredient in some detergents, are plant nutrients that can cause excessive growth of nuisance plants in the water. Building power washing also removes debris that, if discharged, can clog storm drain inlets and grates and reduce or even prevent stormwater drainage to the collection system.

Note: Building power washing, without proper containment and prior written consent from HDOT Harbors Division, is prohibited. It is also NOT acceptable to let wastewater from washing sit in areas such as parking lots, driveways, or walkway to evaporate, because contaminants can accumulate and flow into storm drains or state waters during the next rainfall event.

BMP Implementation

Primary Option:

- Apply dry wash methods (e.g., wiping with wet rags, wet mopping) that do not generate wastewater or cause wastewater to flow freely to the ground. Rinse water must be disposed of properly (e.g., into the sanitary sewer).

Secondary Option:

- Power washing with a (portable) containment system to completely contain and capture the wastewater. The system must be adequately designed to prevent water from entering a storm drain or from running off-site. A containment pad, berms, and pump system can be used to capture wastewater and divert it to a holding tank for proper disposal (see below).

Other Things To-Be-Considered:

- Building power washing is allowed only after the BMPs are approved in writing by HDOT Harbors Division.
- When power washing old paint off a building, the wastewater will contain paint chips that need to be collected, evaluated, and disposed of properly. Old paint stripped off commercial buildings may contain heavy metals (such as Pb, Cr, Cd, or Hg), and may need to be disposed of as a hazardous waste.
- Options for wastewater disposal include: (1) obtaining permission to direct the wastewater to the City’s publicly owned treatment works [POTW] through a sanitary sewer on-site; (2) collecting the wastewater from the site and arranging for disposal at a POTW or industrial waste disposal facility.

The State Department of Transportation, Harbors Division has developed the Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) in compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit.

The SWMP is administered by the Environmental Section under the Engineering Branch.

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