



Pressure Washing Reference Guide

The following reference material is to be used by the commercial pressure wash owner/operator as a guide to facilitate compliance under the current Davidson County, **Metro Water Services (MWS) environmental regulations**. In order to insure compliance within Metro Nashville/Davidson County, the commercial pressure wash operator must be aware of **all** pertinent Metro, State, and Federal regulations and not simply those contained within this document.

When operating pressure wash equipment for the purpose of washing motor vehicles, structures and parking lots, all individuals involved must first understand that the wash water produced is, in most instances, **harmful to the environment and must be disposed of in a drain which routes to a MWS sanitary waste treatment plant. The storm drains and ditches in Metro Davidson County do not route water to the MWS sanitary waste treatment plant!** Instead, the storm drains and ditches within Davidson County are part of Metro's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This MS4 includes all storm drains, roads, ditches, culverts, or parking lots that are designed to route **clean/unpolluted stormwater**, safely into the streams of Metro Nashville/Davidson County.

The NPDES division of MWS has the specific task of monitoring all discharges into this MS4 for the purpose of maintaining the water quality of the streams within Davidson County. If disposed of improperly into the MS4 or stream, **the constituents of pressure wash wastewater would damage this stream and the aquatic life within it, even when biodegradable cleaners are used.** Nearly all discharges into the MS4 and streams (including those of the commercial pressure washer) are deemed "Illicit Discharges" and are illegal in Davidson County under Metro Code of Laws (Metro Code) §§ 15.64.205.

In order to be compliant with Metro guidelines, the pressure wash operator must give special attention when disposing wash water and must insure that:

1. Washing activities are conducted in an area where the wash water is either absorbed into grass, gravel or soil (no wash water leaves the property) or
2. All wash water is "contained and captured" and subsequently disposed of in a drain that routes to a MWS sanitary treatment plant. Contain and capture involves first; containing the wash water in a bermed, dyked, or low area on the property and second; recovering this wash water using a pump system. The contaminated wash water must then be discharged into an approved sanitary drain on the property where the washing is taking place. If no access is available to a sanitary drain on the property, the wash water must be collected, transported to, and disposed of in an appropriate sanitary drain.
 - Appropriate drains shall include sinks, toilets, floor drains, clean out stubs and any other drains that are plumbed to a MWS sanitary line.
 - Petroleum absorbent materials such as pads or clay must be used to remove petroleum based materials and filters must be used to remove excessive amounts of dirt, grit and other solids before discharging to the sanitary line.
 - The wash water being discharged to a sanitary line must have a pH between 5.0 & 10.0 Standard Units.

Examples of PERMISSABLE washing activities:

- Washing personal/privately owned vehicles, buildings, or driveways on private property for non-business related purposes.
- The rinsing of clean/new cars (such as dealership automobiles) with clean water on a clean parking lot, even if runoff is occurring. No cleaners, soaps or detergents (biodegradable or other) can be used in this situation. Any residual oils, dirt and other solids must be removed from the wash water by placing filters on any receiving storm drain.

- Washing vehicles or structures in an area where the wash water soaks into gravel, grass, or dirt on the property and leaves no residual material that could come into contact with rainwater/stormwater and be washed into the MS4 or streams.
- Washing vehicles in an area containing a drain that routes to a sanitary treatment plant.

Examples of NON-PERMISSABLE washing activities:

- Washing vehicles with soap on a parking lot where the wash water is either leaving the property directly or accumulating and drying on the lot. This is illegal due to the fact that, as the contaminated wash water dries on the pavement it leaves the harmful contaminants behind, only to be washed from the property and into the MS4 or streams during the next rain event.
- Allowing the materials (oil, grease, paint chips, etc.) being washed off the vehicle or building to enter the MS4, even when no soaps or other chemical cleaning agents are used.
- Pressure washing a parking lot without containing and capturing, even when no soaps or detergents are used. This is illegal due to the fact that pollutants generally found on a car lot (oil, grease, heavy metals, etc.) will be liberated during the wash process and transported to the MS4 or streams.
- Washing in any manner that leaves residues and stains or contaminates the soil with oil, grease, or other pollutants.

Again, the dumping of pressure wash wastewater down a drain which routes to a MWS sanitary treatment plant is the correct method of disposal for the pressure wash operator. By dumping this waste material down a sanitary drain, we are insured that this wash water will be properly treated at a treatment plant and not have any detrimental effects on the environment. However, some pressure washing activities produce waste streams that can be harmful to the MWS sanitary treatment plant and may need some additional form of pre-treatment before discharging. Pressure washing activities such as engine degreasing or tanker and boxcar cleaning are examples of such activities and consequently need to be monitored by the MWS Industrial Compliance Office. All discharges into sanitary lines/drains that route to a treatment plant are regulated/permitted under Metro Code of Laws (Metro Code) §§15.60 “Industrial Waste Discharges. For permitting questions and applications, call the MWS Industrial Compliance Office at (615) 862-4590 or go online at www.nashville.gov/water/environmental_compliance.htm

Thank you very much for recognizing the importance of our streams as a valuable natural resource and your help in the protection and improvement of the streams within Metro Nashville/Davidson County.

This publication is a public service of:
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Metro Water Services is in the process of complying with all appropriate Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines. For additional information contact Joseph A. Estes, Sr., 1600 2nd Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37208-2206; telephone 615-862-4862.