

BG-62 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 including:

- 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



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- 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)
- 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 and proper wastewater disposal 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 in the table below. Discharging wastewater to the sanitary sewer must be performed in accordance with local regulations.

| Type of Surface | Cleaning Method | Proper Disposal |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sidewalks, plazas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dry cleanup first, wash without soap. <input type="checkbox"/> If necessary to wash with soap, temporarily block the storm drain or contain runoff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Screen wash water, if needed, to catch debris then discharge to landscaping, or to a gutter, street, or storm drain. <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge to landscaping or collect water and pump to the sanitary sewer. |
| Parking areas, driveways, drive-throughs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily block the storm drain or contain runoff. <input type="checkbox"/> Use absorbents to pick up oil; then dry sweep. <input type="checkbox"/> Clean with or without soap. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collect water and pump to the sanitary sewer. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i> |
| Restaurant/food handling dumpster areas, grease storage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily block the storm drain or contain runoff. <input type="checkbox"/> Perform an initial dry cleanup using a broom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If you must use water after sweeping/using absorbents, collect water and pump to the sewer. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i> |
| Building surfaces, decks, etc., without loose paint | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use high-pressure water, no soap. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Screen wash water, if needed, to catch debris <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge to landscaping, or to a gutter, street, or storm drain. |
| Unpainted building surfaces, wood decks, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Block the storm drain or contain runoff. <input type="checkbox"/> Use soap or acid wash to remove deposits, wood restorer, or other chemicals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure pH is between 6 and 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge to landscaping or collect wash water into a tank and pump to the sanitary sewer. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check the local wastewater authority's requirements for discharge.</i> |

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| Painted surfaces being cleaned to remove paint or graffiti | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily block the storm drain or contain runoff. <input type="checkbox"/> Use cleaning method which minimizes use of water. | <input type="checkbox"/> Collect wash water in a tank and pump to the sewer, or dispose as hazardous waste, as appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Call the local municipal wastewater agency or check the CalRecycle Website for help in determining whether the paint contains toxic pollutants or if the solvent cleaners you use are hazardous.</i> |
| Graffiti removal | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily block the storm drain or contain runoff. <input type="checkbox"/> Wet sand-blast. | <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

References

Bay Area Clean Water Agencies, 2003. *Pollution from Surface Cleaning Fact Sheet*. Available on-line at:

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http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/watershedpdf/bmp_2009_pressure_washers.pdf.

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