

# BG-64 Mobile Cleaning – Vehicle and Equipment Washing

---



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 transportation-related objects or areas including:

- Mobile cleaning or power washing of vehicle exteriors
- Engine or equipment degreasing
- Acid cleaning of unpainted trucks or containers
- Auto detailing
- Car lot rinsing

Information specific to: food service business-related cleaning, surface 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
- Generating polluted wash water from cleaning activities

Pollutants can include:

- Heavy metals (copper, lead, nickel, and zinc)



# BG-64 Mobile Cleaning – Vehicle and Equipment Washing

---

- Hydrocarbons (oil and grease, PAHs)
- Toxic chemicals (solvents, chlorinated compounds, glycols)
- Acids and alkalis

## 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

## 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.

<b>Exterior Fleet Washing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not discharge contaminated wash water to storm drain</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use wash pads to capture wash water</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use one of the following practices for disposal of the wash water:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Discharge to sanitary sewer</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Temporarily seal storm drain, collect, and discharge to sanitary sewer or if minimal discharge, discharge to vegetated area (with owner's permission) if it will contain all wastewater without runoff.</li> </ul>
<b>Semi-Trailers (food service business-related interior cleaning)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not discharge wash water into storm drain inlets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sweep, collect, and dispose of debris.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use dry cleaning methods.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dispose of food residue as garbage or to sanitary sewer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid hosing down trailer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Send wash water to sanitary sewer.</li> </ul>

# BG-64 Mobile Cleaning – Vehicle and Equipment Washing

---

<b>Boat Cleaning</b> (if paint chips are removed in preparation for painting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discharge filtered wash water to sanitary sewer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dispose of lead-based, copper-based, tributyltin, or PCB paint particles as hazardous waste.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other types of paint chips may be disposed of in a garbage can. Consult the local garbage company.</li> </ul>
<b>Engine and Equipment Degreasing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not discharge wash water to storm drain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pretreatment is required before discharge to the sanitary sewer is allowed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean wash pads.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with customer's facility operator first.</li> </ul>
<b>Acid Cleaning of Unpainted Trucks or Containers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not discharge wash water to storm drain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neutralize runoff to a pH between 6 and 10.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discharge to sanitary sewer (once runoff is neutralized).</li> </ul>
<b>Auto Detailing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small amounts of runoff may be allowed to evaporate on a paved surface.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plug the storm drain. Collect and discharge to sanitary sewer or if minimal discharge, discharge to unpaved area (with owner's permission) if it will contain all wastewater without runoff.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discharge remaining soapy wash water to sanitary sewer or distribute over a large dirt area (with owner's permission).</li> </ul>
<b>Rinsing of New Cars for Dust Removal</b> (no soap used)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> May discharge to storm drain or unpaved area.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not allow runoff to flow through oil deposits on streets.</li> </ul>

## Treatment Control BMPs

The use of self-contained, mobile wastewater collection and 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:  
<http://bacwa.org/Portals/0/Committees/BAPPG/Archive/Pollution%20from%20Surface%20Cleaning.pdf>

Orange County Stormwater Program. Industrial/Commercial Business Activities Best Management Practices. Fact Sheet IC24 Disposal of Wastewater Generated by Mobile

# BG-64 Mobile Cleaning – Vehicle and Equipment Washing

---

Businesses & Outdoor Activities. Available on-line at:

<http://ocwatersheds.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=10201>.

San Diego County Watershed Protection Program, 2009. *Pressure Washing Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)*. Available on-line at:

[http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/watershedpdf/bmp\\_2009\\_pressure\\_washers.pdf](http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/watershedpdf/bmp_2009_pressure_washers.pdf).

Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program, 2012. *Mobile Businesses Best Management Practices*. Available on-line at: [http://www.scvurppp-](http://www.scvurppp-w2k.com/pdfs/1112/mobilecleanertrifoldFINAL_050112.pdf)

[w2k.com/pdfs/1112/mobilecleanertrifoldFINAL\\_050112.pdf](http://www.scvurppp-w2k.com/pdfs/1112/mobilecleanertrifoldFINAL_050112.pdf).

Santa Cruz County Department of Public Works, Environmental Compliance Unit. Best Environmental Management Practices. *Environmentally Responsible Car Washing*.

Available on-line at: <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/pdf/ResponsibleCarwashing.pdf>.

Town of Truckee, 2009. *Stormwater Pollution Prevention for the Mobile Cleaner Industry*.

Available on-line at: <http://www.townoftruckee.com/home/showdocument?id=5350>.