



Washing Vehicles

When vehicles are washed, the runoff contains several materials that need to be kept away from waterways. Runoff contains degreasers, detergents, oil, grease, heavy metals, rubber and sediment and needs to be pre-treated with an oil water separator before it is discharged to the sewer. Wastewater from washing vehicles cannot be allowed into stormwater drains or onto soil where it can seep to the waterways.

For more information on related topics, please see the environmental information guide; "Degreasers and Detergents", "Oil Water Separators" and "Water Restrictions".

Washbays

Washbays are dedicated vehicle washing areas, the purpose being to stop runoff entering stormwater drains or running onto soil.

Washbays are bunded or having sloping floors so that wastewater cannot escape. It is recommended that the drains in washbays are covered to prevent rainwater from entering. Washbays generally drain to an oil water separator, as runoff requires pre-treatment. If the washbay does not drain to a separator then the wastewater must be collected by a licensed waste contractor and waste tracking procedures must be followed.

For more information on disposing of liquid waste, please see the environmental information guide; "Liquid Wastes – Disposal".

Before building a washbay, talk with your local council (NSW) or with Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) as there may be certain requirements.

Saving Water

It is important that automotive businesses use as small an amount of water as possible when washing vehicles due to the lack of this precious resource and the charge that all businesses have to be socially responsible. There are many ways that your business can cut down on its water use when washing vehicles:

- **Install an automatic vehicle wash system**
Automatic systems can control the amount of detergent and water used for each vehicle wash.
- **Install a water recycling system**
Water recycling equipment can clean used water for re-use.
- **Use a bucket instead of a hose**
Cleaning with a bucket limits the amount of water used.
- **If using a hose, install a trigger nozzle**
Trigger nozzles attach to the end of hoses and make it easy to turn the hose off, preventing hoses being left on unnecessarily.
- **Install a rainwater tank**
Rainwater tanks can collect a substantial amount of water, reducing your reliance on dam water and thereby reducing your water bills.

CONSIDER: Both NSW and the ACT are under strict water restrictions. To wash vehicles, an exemption permit needs to be granted by Sydney Water, Hunter Water, your local council (in NSW) or by ACTewAGL (in the ACT).

For more information on applying for exemptions from water restrictions, please see the environmental information guide; "Water Restrictions".

Detergent

Detergents should be biodegradable and phosphate-free. Biodegradable detergents degrade 80% of chemical matter naturally within 21 days. Phosphate free detergents reduce the damaging effects of phosphate in our waterways; excessive plant growth and algal bloom. By choosing detergents that are biodegradable and phosphate free, you are giving the environment the best chance of being able to safely deal with the detergent without side effects.

Of course, even if it is biodegradable and phosphate free, detergent or runoff containing detergent cannot be allowed into stormwater drains or onto soil where it can seep to the waterways. Runoff must be pre-treated by an oil water separator before being discharged to the sewer or contained and removed by a licensed waste contractor.

For more information, please see environmental information guides; "Degreasers & Detergents", "Liquid Wastes - Disposal" and "Oil Water Separators".

Key contacts

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Department of Environment & Climate Change (NSW)

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www.environment.nsw.gov.au

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1300 657 657

www.hunterwater.com.au

Local Council Contacts (NSW)

www.dlg.nsw.gov.au

Sydney Water (NSW)

13 20 92

www.sydneywater.com.au

Territory & Municipal Services (ACT)

13 22 81

www.tams.act.gov.au

WorkCover (ACT)

02 6205 0200

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13 10 50

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Important Disclaimer

These Information Guides have been developed to assist MTA NSW and MTA ACT members to better manage their environmental impacts. However it remains the responsibility of the individual business to determine the extent to which various laws and best practice guidelines apply to them and to take appropriate steps to achieve compliance. Though every possible effort has been made, MTA NSW accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information.