

PREVENTING POLLUTION FROM WASHING CARS

Did you know the water that runs off your property and from the streets runs directly to the ocean without treatment? Anything that runs down the gutter will eventually end up on our beaches and in our coastal waters. That's why we have to keep pollutants out of the drain system. Everyone wants a nice clean car. It's expensive and often inconvenient to take your car to a commercial car wash. Some people just prefer to wash their cars themselves. Your car is a major investment that needs washing and other maintenance. But automobile washing activities have the potential to contribute to storm drain pollution because road dust washed from vehicles may contain heavy metals and hydrocarbons. Any leaking fluids washed from the car may be carried to the storm drain by the wash water. Detergents used for automobile washing may contain phosphorus and foaming agents, nutrients which contribute to excessive algae growth, choking off oxygen to fish and beneficial plants.



Additional Resources:

Environmental Protection Agency
(Stormwater Sources and Solutions):
tinyurl.com/57h7ak6w

Environmental Protection Agency
(NPDES Stormwater Program):
tinyurl.com/5cw42x79

Produced by the City of Fullerton's
Public Works Department



WASHING YOUR VEHICLE AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Simple steps you can take to keep our
water clean



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Preventing dangerous runoff from washing your car is simple. Just doing the things listed below will ensure you protect the environment when you wash your car.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The following suggestions were developed to give you some ideas on how you can safely wash your car. They're common sense things that don't take a lot of time or cost a lot of money, but can do a lot to prevent water pollution.

- Try to wash your car on the lawn or other surface where wash water can soak in instead of running into the gutter.
- Don't use "hose off" engine degreasers or acid-based wheel cleaners.
- When possible, take your car to a commercial car wash that recycles wash water.
- Turn off the water if you're not actively washing the car. Don't waste water by letting it run into the street.

- Try to use car detergents and cleaners labeled "bio-degradable", "non-toxic", or "phosphate-free".

- Be sure to use only as much detergent as necessary to clean your car. Don't mix too much with wash water.

- Pour your bucket of dirty wash water into a sink or other fixture that drains to the sanitary sewer system. Never pour dirty water into the gutter.

