

Washwater Discharges from Vehicle Washing

Water used in washing cars, trucks, and other equipment may contain a wide range of contaminants including oil, other hydrocarbons, metals, detergents, road salt, and grit. These pollutants can be toxic and harmful to living organisms, including fish and the people who eat the fish. It is important to keep these contaminants out of our surface and drinking water. Any subsurface discharges of vehicle wash wastewater require a UIC or a wastewater system and potable water supply (if co-mingled with sanitary wastewater) permit.

There are four preferable options for handling your vehicle washwater that do not involve a subsurface discharge:

1) Install a closed system with no discharge

Operate a “closed loop system” by recycling your washwater. Because no wastewater is discharged to the ground’s subsurface or surface, this would not require a UIC permit.

2) Install a holding tank

Install a holding tank to collect the washwater from the floor drain and have the contents disposed of properly. Holding tanks can be installed and pumped out as needed by a qualified hauler. The holding tank contents must be disposed of at an approved disposal facility (i.e. a municipal wastewater treatment facility.)

3) Discharge to municipal sanitary sewer

Connections to the local wastewater treatment facility must be permitted by the Regional Offices and may require adequate pretreatment (e.g. an oil/water separator.) The town may also have an approval process for connections to its wastewater treatment facility.

4) Limit washings to 30 or fewer vehicles per week

If the following conditions are met, the washwater from 30 or fewer vehicle washings per week may be discharged to the **ground surface**.

A) Whether these vehicle washings occur indoors or outside, the following conditions must be met:

- i. The washwater going to the ground surface must sheet flow over a vegetated area and infiltrate or evaporate on-site, therefore the site should not be graded in a way that encourages the collection of the washwater.
- ii. The washwater must not cause soil erosion and must not reach waters of the state, either directly or through stormwater drains or ditches.
- iii. Only non-phosphorus soaps may be used.
- iv. The use of acids, bases, metal brighteners and degreasing agents as well as pressure washing engines, undercarriage washing and engine cleaning are all prohibited.

B) If the vehicle washing takes place indoors (discharging to ground surface), the following **additional** conditions must be met:

- i. All washing must occur in a wash bay that has a floor drain and is physically separated from where vehicles are serviced.
- ii. An oil-water separator must be installed on the floor drain piping.
- iii. The floor drain must be registered with the UIC program (call the UIC Program, 802-477-3441).
- iv. Hazardous materials must be physically segregated from the wash area.

C) If the vehicle washing takes place outside; the following **additional** conditions must be met:

- i. Whenever possible, the washing should occur on an impermeable surface (i.e. concrete, asphalt, plastic, or other) and then sheet flow over a vegetated area.

Regardless of which option you chose, remember:

If there is ever a hazardous spill to a floor drain or to the ground and there is a potential for groundwater contamination or the contents of a holding tank is in question, contact the Hazardous Spills Hotline 1-800-641-5005 for assistance.

For more information, contact:

Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection Division

Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program

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DEC Regional Offices

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Essex:111 West Street802-557-1680

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