



Best Management Practices for Car Washing Fundraisers

(Help Prevent Water Pollution!)



I. INTRODUCTION!

Car washes are a popular means of raising money for worthwhile causes (e.g., scout troops, sports teams, school clubs, and charities). However, the runoff from washing cars, if not properly managed, can adversely impact local waterways. When conducting car wash fundraisers follow these guidelines to prevent wash water from flowing untreated to the storm water conveyance system (i.e. gutters, streets, storm drains and creeks). **Remember you are the solution to stormwater pollution!**

This guide is intended to explain the water quality issues regarding the discharge of car wash water from fundraisers and the guidelines to be followed when conducting these activities.

More Information Call

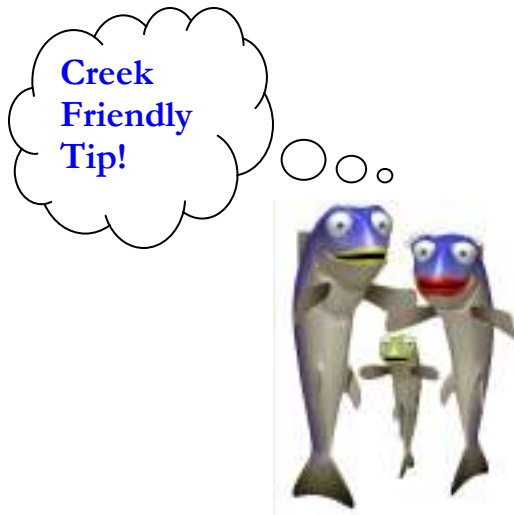
(805) 781-7530 or (805) 783-7866

or visit <http://www.slocity.org/publicworks>, then stormwater



II. HOW DOES RUNOFF FROM CAR WASH FUNDRAISERS HARM OUR LOCAL WATERWAYS AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

When washing cars in a paved area, the wash water which contains soap and detergent, residues from exhaust fumes, brake pads, gasoline and motor oil washes off the cars, flows off the pavement and into the storm water conveyance system (i.e. gutters, streets, storm drains and creeks). Unlike the water we use in our homes and businesses which is connected to the sanitary sewer system and treated at wastewater treatment plants, the stormwater conveyance system is not connected to the sanitary sewer system. All water and pollutants entering the storm water conveyance system go directly into our local creeks, bays and ocean without any kind of treatment. Soap, detergents (even biodegradable ones) can be poisonous to crabs, shell fish, and fish, damaging gills and depleting the water of oxygen. **A single fundraising event can pour thousands of gallons of soapy, oily, and gritty water into your local stream.**



Consider holding your car washing fundraiser at a commercial car wash. Wash water from most commercial car wash facilities is recycled and all are connected to the sanitary sewer system. Call your local car wash to ask if they offer fundraising options for schools, teams, and charities.

III. PLANNING A LOW IMPACT CAR WASH FUNDRAISER!

If you choose not to partner with a commercial car wash, try to incorporate the following practices (i.e. Control Measures and Pollution Prevention Practices) to reduce the overall environmental impact of your fundraiser:

- 1. Selecting the site for your car wash** is very important. When talking to the property owner(s) of shopping centers, schools or churches where you are considering holding the event, ask them where the water flows from the storm drains on the property. The best locations will have some stormwater management controls in place. These control





measures include grass swales, sand filters, oil and grit separators, storm water management ponds, and wetlands that treat storm water before it is discharged to one of the City of San Luis Obispo's creeks. If the property does not have stormwater management controls in place, choose a site where the wash water can soak into grass, gravel, or be diverted to nearby landscaping. This will allow the wash water to filter through the vegetation and/or soil instead of flowing directly into a storm drain. Absorbent pads, which can be purchased at automotive shops, can also be placed in the curb or grass swale to catch oils and other chemicals.



IV. The **BEST APPROACH** is to utilize a **CONTAINMENT SYSTEM** that will capture all wash water. Once the wash water is captured use a sump pump and discharge the water into the sanitary sewer (via a sink or toilet) or to a landscape area for secondary use. Prior to discharging to the sanitary sewer system be sure to check with the Utilities Industrial Waste Manager at (805) 781-7220 for restrictions and limitations. **Portable Plastic Wash Mats and Pits are a good example of containment devices for car wash fundraisers.**



**Portable Plastic Containment System
(For Car Washing)**

These are used principally to control wastewater when washing vehicles, although many other applications come to mind. They consist of heavy plastic watertight sheeting arranged with foam or inflatable berms all around, thus forming catchment area. Typically, vehicles are driven onto the wash mat with double berms at each end to reduce the likelihood of water loss upon entering or leaving the pit. After vehicles are washed, the waste water on the pit is removed with a sump pump or vacuum to a landscape area if no chemicals were used, or to the sanitary sewer system via a toilet or sink. Prior to discharging to the sanitary sewer system be sure to check with the Utilities Industrial Waste Manager at (805) 781-7220 for restrictions and limitations. Containment system prices vary according to size and function.



V. WATER QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR CAR WASH FUNDRAISERS!

1. BEFORE BEGINNING YOUR CAR WASH FUNDRAISER:

- ✓ **Hold a meeting with all participants** to explain the proper procedures that should be followed when conducting these activities.
- ✓ **Remove all trash and debris** from the car washing area.
- ✓ Purchase only soaps, cleaners or detergents labeled “**non-toxic,**” “**chlorine-free,**” “**phosphate free,**” or “**biodegradable.**” The safest products for the environment are vegetable-based or citrus-based soaps. Using a biodegradable soap does not lessen its immediate environmental impact – it simply means that the soap will degrade in time. **A flush of “biodegradable” soapsuds will still harm fish or invertebrates in your local stream or creek.**
- ✓ **Do not** purchase acid based wheel cleaners or engine degreasers.
- ✓ **Select a site where the wash water can soak into grass, gravel, or be diverted to nearby landscaping.** This will allow the wash water to filter through the vegetation and/or soil instead of flowing directly to the storm water conveyance system (i.e. gutters, streets, storm drains and creeks).
- ✓ If you select a site that drains into a street, block off the storm drain with sandbags and either divert the wash water to an area where the water can pool and evaporate throughout the day or arrange to dispose of the wash water down a sanitary sewer drain. **Prior to discharging to the sanitary sewer system be sure to check with the Utilities Industrial Waste Manager at (805) 781-7220 for restrictions and limitations.**
- ✓ Prior to the day of the car wash and the day of, hold a meeting with car wash volunteers to go over all the methods for reducing environmental impacts detailed in this guide.
- ✓ At the end of the day, remember to properly dispose of sandbags.



2. DURING THE CAR WASH FUNDRAISER:

- ✓ Shake car mats into a trash can or vacuum them. **Do not** shake dirt from car mats directly onto the ground.
- ✓ Use a bucket of soapy water to re-soap rags or sponges throughout the wash rather than adding more soap directly to





- ✓ rags or sponges.
- ✓ **Wring sponges and wash rags into buckets, not the ground.**
- ✓ **Conserve water** by using a spray nozzle with an automatic shut off and shutting off or kinking the hose when not in use.
- ✓ Always empty buckets into the sanitary sewer system (e.g. sinks or toilets), **NOT down the storm drain**.

3. AFTER THE CAR WASH FUNDRAISER:

- ✓ **Remember to clean up.** Have a volunteer walk the perimeter of the site to pick up trash and debris and dispose of it properly. Before you allow anything to go into the gutter or storm drain, stop and think. Storm drains **do not** go to the sanitary sewer; they flow directly into creeks, through wetlands and to the ocean.
- ✓ Remember to **stop and think before you allow anything to go directly into the gutter or storm drain**. Your “soapy suds” can reach a storm drain feeding our local creeks in minutes.

VI. ONLY RAIN IN THE DRAIN

If you follow this motto, you’re well on your way toward successful stormwater management. Your goal should be to **keep any water from making its way to the stormwater conveyance system**.

Clean beaches and healthy creeks, and ocean are important to the City of San Luis Obispo. However, car wash fund raising activities

can lead to water pollution if you are not careful. Cars often have grease, oil, and other residual chemicals on them and when washed these pollutants are carried away with the wash water. In the typical home environment the volume of run-off created during a car washing activity does not make it to the stormwater conveyance system. However, during a car wash fundraising event dozens of vehicles are washed and thousands of gallons of water are used that carry the pollutants into the stormwater conveyance system. Again, follow the BMP’s outlined herein to help prevent water pollution. Remember your goal is to raise funds, not pay fines!





VII. EMERGENCIES OR SPILLS!

ABANDONED CHEMICALS – To report abandoned chemicals contact:

- From 8:00am - 5:00pm, Mon - Fri - call (805) 781-7383.
- After normal business hours - dial 911.

APPARENT WATER LEAK OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN – To report an apparent water leak of unknown origin contact:

- From 8:00am - 5:00pm, Mon - Fri call (805) 781-7215.

DEBRIS IN THE STREET – To report debris in the street contact:

- Contact the City Corporation Yard at (805) 781-7220.

FALLEN TREE – To report a fallen tree blocking the water flow in a creek during normal business hours: Monday through Friday, from 8:00am to 5:00pm contact:

- **During a heavy storm event**, mud slide or something of a similar nature call **(805) 781-7220**, or
- **During dry conditions** call **(805) 781-7211**.

The City may take action, to alleviate the flooding of surrounding properties.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SPILL – To report a hazardous materials spill contact:

- From 8:00am - 5:00pm, Mon - Fri - call the City's Hazardous Materials Coordinator at (805) 781-7383 or electronically at kboyle@slocity.org.
- After normal business hours - dial 911.

ILLICIT DISCHARGE OF SUSPICIOUS ORIGIN (NON-SEWAGE): The City is concerned about illicit discharges of suspicious origin (common warning signs of illicit discharges are dry weather flow, suds, sewage, oil and gas) and, thus we appreciate your assistance in reporting these discharges to our staff at:

- City's 24-Hour Pollution Prevention Hotline - (805) 781-7876, (or)
- Call the City's Stormwater Management Department at (805) 781-7530.

OTHER EMERGENCIES

- Call 911.

OTHER LIQUID MATERIALS (NON-SEWAGE) – To report a discharge or spill of **OTHER LIQUID MATERIALS** call:

- The City of San Luis Obispo 24-Hour Water Pollution Problem Reporting Hotline at: (805) 783-7876, or call
- (805) 781-7530, or visit



- http://www.slocity.org/publicworks_then_stormwater to contact us electronically.

SEWAGE DISCHARGE (KNOWN OR SUSPECTED) – To report a sewage discharge contact:

- From 8:00am - 5:00pm, Mon - Fri - call (805) 781-7215.
- After normal business hours - call (805) 781-7215.

STORMWATER CONCERN (NON-SEWAGE) – To report a stormwater concern contact:

- 24-Hour Water Pollution Reporting & Information Hotline (805) 783-7876, or call
- Stormwater Management at (805) 781-7530, or visit
- http://www.slocity.org/publicworks_then_stormwater to contact us electronically.

WATER SERVICE ISSUES - If you are experiencing difficulties with your potable (i.e. drinking) water, please contact the City of San Luis Obispo's Utilities Department at (805) 781-7215 or [Click Here](#) to be connected directly to the Utilities Homepage for additional information.

The tips contained in this guide provide useful information to help prevent water pollution from car wash fundraising activities. If you have other suggestions, please contact us electronically via: http://www.slocity.org/publicworks_then_stormwater.

Remember, the ocean begins at your front door!

VIII. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP'S) FOR STORM WATER MANAGEMENT, PLEASE call the City of San Luis Obispo's Stormwater Management Program at (805) 781-7530.