



Water Quality Best Management Practices For Community Car Wash Events

Public Participation Form

Spokane County, Engineering & Roads, Stormwater Utility

1026 W. Broadway Avenue, Spokane, WA 99260

(509)477-3600

Community car wash events are a popular means of raising money for worthwhile causes. However, if runoff from car washes is not properly managed, it can negatively impact our local rivers, lakes, streams and aquifer. This document explains the water quality concerns and outlines steps that should be taken to protect our environment when conducting a car wash fundraiser event in our community.

When conducting your fundraiser event, please follow the steps outlined below to comply with local laws and protect our community's waters.

How does runoff from car wash fundraiser events harm the environment?

Wash water from car washing activities typically contains dirt (sediment), soap (detergent/surfactants), gasoline and motor oil, as well as metals and oil/grease residues from exhaust fumes and brake pads. When this dirty water is allowed to flow into stormdrains, it can travel directly to our local waters without treatment. This pollution can kill or harm fish and other aquatic life and make our waters unsafe for drinking, swimming and fishing. Alone, one car wash fundraiser event may not create a significant adverse environmental impact. But, collectively, car wash fundraiser events can contribute large amounts of polluted wash water to our local waterways.

Did you know that commercial car washes in Spokane County are not allowed to discharge wash water to the storm drain system? They must either recycle the water, pump it to a lawn/landscape/swale area, where the plants and soils can naturally remove pollutants from the water before it enters a local river, lake, stream or aquifer. Also, the County is working hard to educate residents about proper ways to reduce pollution if they choose to wash their car at home.

Planning your car wash fundraiser event - select a suitable location:

Consider the following options for selecting the site for your car wash event, in the order shown:

- **Option #1.** Conduct your community car wash on a grass or lawn area where wash water can infiltrate into the ground and pollutants can be naturally removed by the grasses and soils.
 - **Option #2.** Select an area to wash the cars where the wash water will not enter storm drain inlets or nearby waterways. Look for an area where wash water will naturally drain to a lawn, landscaping or stormwater swale, allowing the water to be cleaned naturally and soak into the ground without polluting our waters.
 - **Option #3.** On hot days, block off the storm drain inlet(s) with a heavy rubber mat(s) and allow the water to pool and evaporate throughout the day. If standing water at the inlet is a problem (e.g., safety concerns), or the water has not evaporated at the end of the day, you may need to use a sump pump/hose or wet/dry shop vacuum to move the water to a lawn, landscaped, or stormwater swale area for natural cleaning and evaporation.
- If none of the above options work, the site you are considering is not acceptable for a car wash fundraiser event.
 - Consider partnering with a local car wash business for your event. Work with an established car washing facility to provide space for the fundraiser event at their facility (runoff must go to a sanitary sewer) or the facility has allowed the non-profit group to sell tickets for the car wash facility, with a portion of the proceeds going back to the group.

Before the car wash fundraiser event:

- If you selected a site where stormdrain inlet(s) will be required to be covered with heavy mats, the County can loan you mats for blocking the storm drain inlet(s), as well as shop vacuum and other necessary equipment.
- Sign the last page of these requirements and provide one copy to the property owner of the car wash site and another copy to Spokane County, Engineering & Roads, Stormwater Utility at 1026 W. Broadway Ave., Spokane, WA 99260 (509)477-3600.
- Purchase soaps, cleaners or detergents labeled “non-toxic,” “phosphate free,” and/or “biodegradable.” However, realize that using these products alone is not enough; even biodegradable products can harm aquatic life over the long term. The safest products for the environment are vegetable-based or citrus-based soaps.

The day of the car wash fundraiser event:

- Ensure that one or more adults are responsible for making sure that all participants follow these requirements.
- Hold a meeting with all participants to explain the potential negative environmental impacts of polluted wash water and the proper procedures that should be followed when conducting car wash activities to reduce pollution. Let the participants read these requirements if necessary.
- Set up your system for keeping wash water out of the County’s storm drain system (see options above), such as washing cars on lawn or blocking all drain inlets with rubber mats.
- Remove all trash and debris from the car washing area.
- Shake car mats into a trash can or vacuum them. Do not shake dirt from car mats directly onto the ground.
- Conserve water and reduce runoff by using a spray nozzle with an automatic shut off and shutting off the hose when not in use. Do not allow water to run continuously.
- Use half the manufacturer’s recommended dosage for soap (e.g., ½ capful instead of 1 capful).
- Use a bucket of soapy water to re-soap rags or sponges throughout the wash process, rather than adding more soap directly to rags or sponges. Wring sponges and rags into buckets, not onto the ground.
- Always empty buckets of dirty wash water onto landscaped areas, where the water cannot reach a storm drain, or into stormwater swales.

After the car wash fundraiser event:

- If you used Option 3, properly dispose of any remaining ponded wash water as discussed above.
- Clean up the site. Have a volunteer walk the perimeter of the site to pick up trash and debris and dispose of it in trashcans or dumpsters.
- Remove rubber mat(s) from the storm drain inlet(s) and return all loaned equipment to the County.

Acknowledgement:

The following signature acknowledges receipt and understanding of this document and intent to comply with the requirements as stated.

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| Name (please print) | Phone Number(s) | Car Wash Event Date/Location |
| Signature/Date | Sponsoring Organization | Property Owner Name |