



City of Texarkana, Texas Stormwater Department

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Mobile/Charity Washing Permit Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of the City of Texarkana, Texas' permit for commercial mobile cosmetic cleaning (also may be known as power washers) and charity car washing is to limit detergent and other pollutant discharges in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). The waters flowing through the MS4 is not treated by the water plant before it is released into local creeks, lakes, or rivers. The sanitary sewer system is the only waters that Texarkana Water Utilities (TWU) treats at the plant. When pollutants run into streets, alleys, drains, and drainage creeks/channels, the pollutants enter our fishing streams and lakes, and into our drinking waters. The City of Texarkana, Texas Stormwater Ordinance prohibits illicit discharges to the MS4 and provides regulation of water discharges from all commercial and industrial activities, as required by the Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) permit the City holds.

Mobile Car Wash Permit

Any person or business who engages in the commercial cleaning (power washing) of vehicles in the City limits of Texarkana, Texas is required by the Stormwater Ordinance to have a permit for the business and its operations.

General Surface Cleaning and Pressure Washing

- Use dry cleanup methods prior to any pressure washing. Use absorbents (kitty litter, rags, sand, etc.) to clean up spills, sweeping, vacuuming, and scrapping off dried debris. The waste material should be disposed of as solid waste.
- Solids should be removed from the area prior to pressure washing and a filter bag or similar filtration device should be used to remove suspended solids from the wastewater.
 - Discharge of any wash water from mobile power washers, directly or via a storm sewer, to surface water in the state* is not authorized under any stormwater permit, either industrial or municipal, and is a violation of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards.
- If you do not use any chemicals or detergents and are only cleaning surfaces of ambient dust, then you may direct the wastewater to nearby landscaping or vegetated area or contain it onsite and allow it to evaporate. When discharging wash water to landscaping, make sure water is absorbed into vegetated or permeable surfaces (gravel, porous pavement) and does not cause erosion or run off into a storm drain or paved area.
 - All other wash water must be captured for proper disposal.
 - Pressure wash with minimal water.
- A visible sheen must not be evident in the discharge. Use an absorbent pad or boom to eliminate any oil from the discharge.

Storm Drain Protection

- Prior to pressure washing, identify where all storm drains are located; wash water must not be allowed to flow down gutters or enter storm drains.
 - Block or cover all storm drains with booms and weighted storm drain covers before pressure washing.
- Determine where water will pool for collection. Use a wet vac to vacuum up the wastewater or allow water to evaporate.

Disposal of Wash Water

- Use a wet vacuum to collect water for disposal to the sanitary sewer.
- Once water is collected, dispose of it properly. Collected wash water may be disposed of into a sanitary sewer drain at the job site or at the contractor's place of business.

How can a car wash pollute our creeks?

A car wash is a great business to operate. But did you know that if soap water enters the storm drain system it will flow directly to the nearest creek? Soap (even if it is biodegradable) is a pollutant that can be harmful to fish and other aquatic life that depend on clean water for their survival. Car wash water in addition to the soap used can carry pollutants such as dirt, oil, and other automotive fluids that may go directly into our creeks. It may be best to have a car wash located over a grassy surface, instead of a parking lot that has an impervious surface.

Once the car wash is over can soap residue harm creeks?

Yes, rain can wash the soap into the storm drain system where it can then pollute creeks. If the car wash area is not on a grassed surface, it is a good idea at the end of the car wash, while the storm drain protection is still in place, to thoroughly rinse down the wash area and properly dispose of the rinse water.

Is it possible to have a car wash that doesn't pollute creeks?

Yes, you just need to select a site where the wash water can be disposed of without it entering a storm drain.

How do I keep car wash water from entering the storm drain system?

It is important to select a site where the wash water can be disposed of without it entering a storm drain. If the car wash area is not on a grassed surface, it is a good idea at the end of the car wash, while the storm drain protection is still in place, to thoroughly rinse down the wash area and properly dispose of the rinse water. There are several ways you can do this;

- Wash the cars in a place where the natural drainage pattern will route wash water into a vegetated area such as a lawn or vacant lot. Be sure to have the owner's permission if wash water is draining onto a neighboring property. You might be able to use sandbags, rolled towels, hoses, or other materials to divert the surface runoff to the vegetated area.
- Another way is to seal off the storm drain, collect the water, and use a small sump pump to pump the water to either a vegetated area or into a clean out opening to the sanitary sewer.

Call the Stormwater Administrative Coordinator for assistance at 909-798-3948