

WASH WATER DISPOSAL PRACTICES FOR MOBILE SURFACE CLEANERS



Spinner cleaning a gas station to a collection system.

It is illegal to allow anything other than rainwater to be discharged to a storm drain.

Wash water should never be discharged to a street, gutter, parking lot, or storm drain. If discharged or disposed of improperly, materials such as solvents, dirt, and soapy water can degrade water quality and creek habitats. Individuals who improperly dispose of non-stormwater materials down the storm drain are subject to civil and criminal prosecution.

How are Storm Drain and Sanitary Sewer Systems different?

Throughout urban communities, the storm drain system transports rainwater directly to local creeks, the bay, and the ocean. This system was created to prevent flooding within communities

and homes. All water and material that enters the storm drain system is **untreated**. The sanitary sewer is a plumbed system that transports used water from buildings to a wastewater collection and treatment facility, where the water and sewage is treated before being released back into the environment.

If you see an outdoor drain and are unsure of its use, assume it is a storm drain and do not discharge wash water to it.

Where can you dispose of wash water?

Any person who conducts cleaning operations that generate wash water must use established best management practices (BMPs). With permission from the local sanitary sewer authority and the property owner, wash water from mobile cleaners can be discharged into a sanitary sewer connection:

1. A floor, utility, or mop sink
2. A toilet
3. Any drain connected to the sanitary sewer



Specialist using a recovery system.



A storm drain cover with a vacuum hose.

▶ *Mobile surface cleaning contractors need to contact the local sanitary sewer authority (within the City of South San Francisco, the Water Quality Control Plant) to procure a discharge permit (if required) before discharging their wastewater to the sanitary sewer system.*

All wash water discharged to a sanitary sewer system must meet the following criteria:

- It must meet the discharge requirements of the local sanitary sewer authority
- It must not contain hazardous materials

▶ *Cleaning products labeled “nontoxic” and “biodegradable” can still harm wildlife and degrade water quality if they enter the storm drain system. These products are prohibited discharges to the storm drain system.*

Before You Clean

Before performing mobile surface cleaner operations, here are some Best Management Practices (BMPs) to follow to ensure that you are protecting our waterways:

1. **Become a BASMAA certified mobile cleaner:** Acquire online training offered by the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA) for mobile surface cleaning. This program will train you to clean different surface areas in an environmentally acceptable way. To become a BASMAA certified mobile surface cleaner go to www.basmaa.org.

2. **Acquire a Wastewater Discharge Permit:** Contact the local sanitary sewer authority and acquire any required permits to discharge your wash water. Also, obtain permission to discharge to the property owner's sanitary sewer plumbing.

3. **Dry Cleanup first:** Remove dirt and debris with a vacuum before washing the area.

4. **Collect Wash Water:** Cover nearby storm drains to keep the wash water from entering. Clean the area with little or no soap and collect the wash water to dispose down the sanitary sewer system if you are permitted to do so.

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Questions?

If you have questions about the proper BMPs for surface cleaning, or you would like to discuss illicit dumping or stormwater pollution, please call the South San Francisco Environmental Compliance Program:

(650) 829-3848

Information is also available on the San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program website:



195 Belle Air Road, South San Francisco, CA 94080
p. (650) 877-8555 f. (650) 829-3855

