



# OUTDOOR SURFACE CLEANING BEST PRACTICES

## Tips on Proper Cleaning

Sweep or vacuum hard surfaces first to remove dirt and litter. Use absorbents (such as rags, absorbent mats or pads, rice hull ash, cat litter, vermiculite, or sand) to spot treat oil or grease stains. Dispose of collected dirt, litter, and absorbents in the trash.

Wash surfaces using only water. Keep the washwater out of the storm drains. With the property owner's permission, the washwater can be disposed of in a planted area. Keep in mind this may stress, damage, and potentially even kill plants.

If the washwater is oily or greasy, you will need to dispose of it through an oil/water separator or a grease interceptor. This may be especially true around restaurants and grease disposal areas.

If soap or other cleaners are needed, then contain, collect, and properly dispose of water in the sanitary sewer system. You may need to filter the washwater prior to discharging to the sanitary sewer system.

Avoid pressure washing any wood treated with chromated copper arsenate (or CCA). Especially avoid using an acid wash or any cleaning products containing chlorine. This will increase the arsenic leaching out of the wood.

## Containment

The County does not require that you use a specific containment method. However, proper containment should prevent any washwater from entering storm drains or nearby streams. It will also allow you to collect washwater and dispose of it properly.

## HAVING CLEAN WATER

is important for our health and economy. Clean water provides a chance for recreation like swimming, fishing, and boating. Clean water can provide jobs and commercial opportunities and adds beauty to our landscape as well as being important for wildlife habitats. All of us benefit from clean water—and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, and groundwater clean.

It is important to realize that soapy or dirty runoff from cleaning outdoor surfaces can contribute to pollution. Your business must properly contain, collect, and dispose of the washwater it creates. Your business may be subject to fines and other penalties if it does not handle its wash water properly.



Contain washwater by:

- ◆ Determining where all the storm drains are located
- ◆ Determining where the high and low spots are on the property to understand where the water will flow.
- ◆ Making sure to block or plug all storm drains in the path of your washwater.

You can contain washwater with:

- ◆ Storm drain mats
- ◆ Flexible berms
- ◆ Flexible or inflatable drain plugs

## Collection

Washwater can be collected from its containment using a wet vacuum, a sump pump, or a vacuum pump. It is important to collect your washwater because any pollutants left on the pavement will eventually be carried into a nearby storm drain or stream by rainwater. Washwater that contains soap, detergent, cleaning products, hazardous waste, or large amounts of any other pollutant cannot be left on paved surfaces.

There are many options besides those shown in the previous sections. The County does not require any specific method or equipment be used as long as you properly contain, collect, and dispose of your washwater. Other options include (1) rotary cleaners that supply high pressure water and collect dirty wash water in an attached storage tank, (2) vacuum booms or berms that seal to the ground and suck washwater through a hose to also collect in a storage tank, and (3) ride-on surface cleaning vehicles that collect and recycle washwater.

## Disposal

Once you have contained and collected your washwater, you will need to dispose of it properly. Proper disposal methods include using the sanitary sewer system or using a private treatment company.

You may need to pretreat your water.

If your washwater:	You will need to pretreat by:
Is over 150°F	Cooling the washwater to under 150°F
Has a pH<6 or pH>9	Neutralize the pH to between 6 and 9
Is oily or greasy	Use an oil-water separator
Has dirt, grit, or paint chips	Filter to remove large particles



If you dispose of your washwater in the sanitary sewer system, you can do so by using an oil and water separator, a sewer clean out, or a sink or floor drain (with the property owner's permission). **You must get approval from Genesee County Drain Commissioner Water & Waste Services before disposing of your washwater in the sanitary sewer system.**

## Disposal to a Planted Area

In special cases, you may be able to dispose of your washwater in a landscaped area with grass or plants. The planted area must be able to absorb all the water you place in it. You will need to obtain the property owner's permission before using this disposal method. Washwater that contains any of the following may NOT be disposed of in a planted area:

- ◆ Grease or oil
- ◆ Food wastes or scraps
- ◆ Solvents
- ◆ Hazardous materials
- ◆ Chlorine
- ◆ Surfactants/Soap\*
- ◆ Biological wastes
- ◆ Petroleum products

\*Soapy water may be disposed of in an on-site planted area if it is from washing the exterior of a residential building.

For more information, contact the Genesee County Drain Commissioner

Surface Water Management  
810.732.1590 | [www.gcdcswm.com](http://www.gcdcswm.com)  
Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)

Water & Waste Services  
810.732.7870 | [www.gcdcwws.com](http://www.gcdcwws.com)  
Sanitary Pre-treatment Program (IPP)

