

El Cajon Storm Water Protection Program

Keep It Clean!



City of El Cajon
Storm Water
Protection Program

Storm Water Guidelines For Car Wash Fundraisers

Although car washing fundraisers are a popular means of raising money for worthwhile causes, there are important environmental issues that, if not properly managed, can negatively impact the aquatic environment and degrade local waterways. When conducting your fundraiser you should follow these guidelines in order to prevent the wash water from entering the storm drains where it flows without treatment of any kind to our streams, rivers and eventually into the ocean.

How does runoff from car wash fundraisers harm the environment?

During a car wash fundraiser, the soapy water used to wash the cars, combines with automotive fluids and residues from the engine, drive train and brakes, and the polluted water flows across the pavement and into nearby storm drains. Alone, one car wash fundraiser event may not create a significant adverse environmental impact. But, collectively, car wash fundraiser events can contribute significant amounts of badly polluted wash water to the storm drain system.

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.
- ✓ Use only soaps, cleaners or detergents labeled “non-toxic,” “phosphate free,” or “biodegradable.” The safest products for the environment are vegetable-based or citrus-based soaps.
- ✓ Do not use acid based wheel cleaners or engine degreasers.
- ✓ Select a washing 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.
- ✓ 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.

During the car wash fundraiser:

- ✓ Shake debris from 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 clean and re-soap rags or sponges throughout the wash rather than adding more soap directly to rags or sponges.
- ✓ Wring sponges and washrags 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., mop sinks or toilets).

After the car wash fundraiser:

- ✓ Remember to clean up and remove sand bags, if used. 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 public sewer system; they flow directly into storm drains, channels and streams to the ocean.
- ✓ Remember that you are a **Valued Participant** in our City's **Pollution Solution**.

