Process & Wash Water

Wash water from certain processes – such as high pressure washing, hosing, mopping, stone/tile cutting, cement mixing, rinsing equipment, and water used to detect tire leaks – have the potential to contribute to ocean pollution if proper methods are not used to control, contain and capture the contaminated water properly. Never let contaminated process or wash water enter the storm drain system.

Control, Contain, Capture, Dispose

You MUST have a plan to control, contain, capture and dispose of the water used when washing or processing materials to prevent it from entering the storm drain system, which includes nearby curb gutters, streets, alleys, ditches and storm drains.

CONTROL – Before starting the job, determine where the water will drain and how you will block, direct, and collect it. Obtain all necessary permits and authorizations for wastewater disposal.

CONTAIN – Never let polluted wash water or debris leave your work area. Isolate the flow using containment pools, berms or booms to contain the water. Collect wash water in a permanent or temporary capture facility.

CAPTURE – Do not leave water on paved surfaces for evaporation. Use a wet vacuum, vacuum boom or vacuum pump to collect the water and properly dispose of it. Sweep up any visible solids and sediments remaining.

DISPOSE – Wash water can be drained onto landscaped areas provided it can be absorbed by the soil without runoff or soil contamination. Wash water may also be collected and disposed of into the sanitary sewer system, such as an onsite sink, toilet or lateral cleanout.

STORMWATER REGULATIONS

It is illegal to discharge process water and wash water into the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) (San Diego Municipal Code §43.0304). Penalties associated with these violations can be up to $10,000 per day per incident.

Other Considerations

To avoid erosion or runoff into the storm drain, use permanent or temporary containment/collection measures to direct wash water to the sanitary sewer, a collection container or an onsite pervious area like a lawn.

If wastewater contains powders or solids (e.g., stone- or tile-cutting water, concrete slurry), pretreatment may be necessary to settle out solids before water may be reused or pumped to the sanitary sewer. Contact the Industrial Wastewater Control Program. Call (858) 654-4100 for special conditions or permits that may be required.

Wash areas shall not include any drains that connect to the storm drain system. Sewer drains within wash areas are allowable if appropriate permits have been obtained from the Public Utilities Department. Drains connected to dead sumps are allowable if proof of appropriate waste water disposal can be provided promptly upon City request. Construction of any new drains or rerouting of existing drainage systems will generally require a permit from the Development Services Department. Call (619) 446-5000 for details.

To dispose of wash water containing oil, paint or other hazardous wastes, drop it off by appointment at the at the Household Hazardous Waste Transfer Facility located at the Miramar Landfill entrance. To make an appointment, call (858) 694-7000. Businesses must dispose of the wash water in accordance with applicable regulations. Businesses should contact the County Hazardous Materials Division at (858) 505-6880 for more information.

Keep Pollutants Out of Storm Drains

Many people think that when water flows into a storm drain it is treated, but the storm drain system and the sanitary sewer system are not connected. Everything that enters storm drains flows untreated directly into our creeks, rivers, bays, beaches and, ultimately, the ocean. Stormwater often contains pollutants – including chemicals, trash and vehicle fluids – all of which contaminate our beaches and harm fish and wildlife.

Whether at home or work, you can help reduce pollution and improve water quality by using the above Best Management Practices as part of your daily cleaning and maintenance routine.