

## MORE INFO

- [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [City of Abilene Environmental Recycling Center](#)
- [City of Abilene - Waste Disposal Information](#)
- [Texas 8-1-1 Call Before You Dig](#)
- [Texas Commission on Environmental Quality](#)
- [National Municipal Stormwater Alliance](#)
- [National Assoc. of Clean Water Agencies](#)



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## CHARITY CAR WASH

Save Our Waterways  
Clean Water, Healthy Life

Stormwater Service Division

# PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

Car washes have long been a favorite fundraiser for schools and other organizations. They provide a needed service, can be done with little money invested and are highly visible. However, even this delightful, community activity impacts our environment and water supply. Dirty water containing soaps, detergents, residue from exhaust fumes, gasoline and motor oils are washed off the cars and flows directly to the nearest storm drain. With some planning and tips we can help you put on a successful car wash that won't hurt our water supply or the wildlife in the area.

## PLANNING FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAR WASH EVENT

- Before beginning your car wash, remove all trash and debris from the car washing area.
- Use only "non-toxic", phosphate free or biodegradable soaps, cleaners or detergents. The safest products for wildlife, marine life and the environment are vegetable-based or citrus-based soaps.
- Avoid the use of acid-based wheel cleaners.
- Always attach a sprayer to the end of the hose to control water flow and waste.



## DID YOU KNOW...

- Biodegradable doesn't necessarily mean safe. These products often degrade faster, but are still toxic to aquatic life.
- Avg. person used 65 gallons of water to wash one car. This total can increase to 6,500 gallons to wash 100 cars.
- Using a pressure washer spreads the water in an even mist causing the water to evaporate quickly and greatly reduces the amount of water reaching the storm drains.

- Select a site where the cars can be driven onto grass or gravel for washing OR select a site where wash water will drain onto grass, gravel or landscaping. This allows the soapy water to filter through vegetation and soil instead of flowing into a storm drain.
- Use a bucket of soapy water to re-soap rags and sponges rather than adding more soap directly to the rag/sponge.
- Do NOT empty buckets of soap or rinse water into the parking lot, street gutter or storm drain, but onto a grassy area, lawn or gravel to allow the water to filter.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

If your wash site drains into the street, block off the storm drain with sandbags or wet towels to divert dirty water onto grass, gravel or an area where the water can pool and evaporate.

Wring sponges or rags into buckets not onto the ground.

Clean up the site after the event. Have volunteers walk the perimeter of the site location picking up any trash and debris and dispose of it properly.

Shake car mats into a trash can or vacuum them. Do NOT shake dirt from car mats directly onto the ground.

Some commercial car wash operators may be willing to sponsor or make available use of their facilities for charity car wash events. These car washes have water recycling systems or drain to a connected municipal sanitary sewer.