



Regulatory Services Division Industrial Discharge Control Section

Mobile Cleaners and Power Washers Best Management Practices

Introduction

WSSC Water is committed to working with Mobile Cleaners and Power Washers (MCPWs) to ensure their non-domestic wastewater is appropriately managed. This helps protect our collection system, our workers, receiving Water Resource Recovery Facilities (WRRFs) and the environment. To achieve this goal, WSSC Water implements the [Industrial Discharge Control \(IDC\) program](#) to address discharges to the sanitary sewer from Industrial Users.¹

Chemicals used during power washing, where cleaning occurs, and what is being washed impact the amount of regulated pollutants (including metals, suspended solids, Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Oil and Grease, Nutrients (ammonia and phosphorus, and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in the wastewater. This guide describes the requirements for the proper disposal of wastewater that is generated by mobile cleaners and the use of pressure-washing equipment. It also provides Best Management Practices (BMPs), which should be used to protect the environment and to comply with regulatory requirements. These BMPs and requirements apply to any mobile cleaners or power washers discharging to the WSSC Water sanitary sewer system. Implementing BMPs can help reduce these concerns and support compliance with the WSSC [Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code](#).

Mobile Cleaners and Pressure Washers Overview

MCPWs use mechanical equipment that typically creates a concentrated, high-pressure jet of water typically controlled by a hand-held wand or nozzle. This jet of water is often used for cleaning a wide variety of surfaces and objects. Water can be cold or heated (steam) depending on industry usage. Example industry activities used by MCPWs include:

- **Transportation** – automobiles, trucks, construction vehicles, boats, aircraft
- **Surface** – Sidewalks, building exteriors, paint, algae, efflorescence
- **Food Related** – vent filters, grills, hoods, grease traps, trash dumpsters

¹ Industrial User - any place of business, endeavor, arts, trade or commerce, whether public or private, commercial or charitable, that uses water in a product, process, or any manner that generates wastewater which is a source of indirect discharge (WSSC [Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code](#), Section 804.2).

- **Miscellaneous** – residential homes, mobile pet care, carpet and upholstery cleaning, trash cans

MCPW Wash Water Disposal

Depending on wastewater characteristics, collected wastewater can be discharged in multiple ways:

- Plain water with no soap/chemical additives or biodegradable soap can typically absorb into lawns or landscaping on the property.
- Wash water with detergents, grease, chemicals may not be discharged into the storm sewer system.
- Commercial operators must be able to capture and reclaim the wash water and then collect it in a container for disposal at an appropriate off-site location; have the waste hauled by a licensed waste hauler, or discharged to the WSSC sanitary sewer at the pressure washer's place of business if the following BMPs and [Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code](#) requirements are met.

Storm Drains and Sanitary Sewer Drains are not the same

The WSSC Water Sanitary Sewer System conveys wastewater from indoor facilities and operations, like sinks, toilets, washing machines, and carwash facilities, to a WRRF where the wastewater is treated to ensure public safety before being released to the environment.

Montgomery and Prince George's Counties have a separate Storm Drain System that conveys excessive storm water and irrigation water from our neighborhoods and streets to nearby creeks, rivers and other drainage areas without further treatment. As a result, it is important to keep pollutants, including all types of wastewater, from discharging into the storm drain system and from accumulating on surfaces that are exposed to rainfall.

Virtually all outdoor drains in streets, parking lots, and elsewhere are storm drains which may not be used for wastewater disposal.

Requirements for Discharge to the WSSC Water Sanitary Sewer

Compliance with environmental regulations requires proper disposal of surface cleaning wastewater, and is achieved based on the nature of pollutants present. It is the responsibility of the generator to determine the proper collection and disposal method for this wastewater. To avoid unanticipated costs, delays, and violations, this determination should always be made prior to starting any job.

All disposal methods are subject to requirements, restrictions, and the prohibitions outlined below. Discharges may only be made to the sanitary sewer system at the customer's site, and with the customer's permission, or at the service provider's facility, through a private connection such as an onsite sink, toilet, or lateral cleanout, at a flow rate that will not cause an overflow or backup of the system. No discharges may be made to a manhole or other sanitary sewer access point within the public right-of-way.

- **WSSC Prohibited Discharges:** Discharges from any source cannot contain substances or effluent conditions listed in Section 804.1 of the WSSC [Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code](#). A summary of discharge limitations is listed in table 804.1.9.
- **Flowrate Limitations:** Discharges to the sanitary sewer must occur at a flow rate that will not cause an overflow or backup of the system. No discharges may be made to a manhole or other sanitary sewer access point within the public right-of-way.

For questions or more information the WSSC Water Industrial Discharge Control Section can be reached at **301-206-8841** or industrialdischargecontrol@wsscwater.com

Visit our website at: www.WSSCWater.com/IDC

MCPW Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Pre-Cleaning Site using Dry Methods

Utilize dry cleanup methods to reduce water use and prevent wastewater pollution.

- Vacuum and sweep surface to remove loose solids.
- Use absorbents to remove oil or grease.

Pre-Sanitary Filtration

Solids may be present in effluent due to strong forces from MCPWs. The material that is removed should be disposed of as solid waste. Removing solids or loose objects from the site will keep filters working longer.

- Install “20 mesh” or finer screen to remove solids before discharge.

Protect Storm Drains

Wastewater discharge into storm drains is prohibited, safeguards must be put in place to collect and divert wastewater from storm drains.

- Conduct wash over impermeable surface with drainage into a basin.
- Install temporary storm drain covers to prevent accidental discharge.
- Rinse surface into collection before rain to prevent chemical runoff.

Pollutant Awareness

Depending on the condition of the surface being cleaned, the wastewater generated could be classified as hazardous waste. Some examples include:

- Wastewater generated from parking lots, storage areas, and gas stations may contain oil, gas, solvents, antifreeze, metals, and/or pesticides.
- Washing building exteriors with paint made prior to 1978 may contain lead. (test paint for lead content from 3 different areas to be cleaned).
- Significant Industrial Users (SIUs) may have categorical contaminants in their facilities. Ensure wastewater is captured in a basin or drains to the appropriate pre-treatment system. For information on obtaining a Discharge Authorization Permit for SIUs please visit the [WSSC Water IDC website](#) or contact IDC directly.

Minimize Cleaning Products

Many soaps and detergents are harmful to the environment, even if they are biodegradable. Surfactants can also carry grease into the sewer system and cause backups. Be sure to read cleaning product labels before disposing of wash water. Follow use and disposal instructions carefully. Each chemical used should have a Safety Data Sheet available.

Minimize Water Use

Certain locations are drought sensitive and have strict water usage requirements. Minimize water use by using high-pressure, low volume nozzles and pre-cleaning.

MCPW Disposal Chart

Method	Effluent Characteristics	Requirements
Discharge to WSSC Water Sanitary Sewer	The wastewater: • Is from transportation related cleaning (washing of fleet vehicle exteriors, mobile auto detailing, rinsing of automobiles, recreational vehicles, boats) • Is from surface related cleaning (sidewalks, plazas, driveways, parking garages, service stations, and building exteriors/walls) • Is from food services related cleaning (restaurant alleys, dumpster areas, floor mats, exhaust or grease filters, lunch wagons, and food carts) • Cannot be hazardous or flammable and cannot contain heavy metals, solids, or significant amounts of oil/grease • pH must be between 6.0-10.0 • may not cause damage to pipes, workers or the WRRF • meets all discharge requirements established in Section 804 of the WSSC Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code	For MCPWs: • Discharge of eligible pressure washing wastewater to the sanitary may be performed at the job site with the property owner's permission or at the pressure washers place of business • Discharge of eligible pressure washing wastewater may require pretreatment prior to WSSC Water approval depending on its contents (i.e. Solids or excessive foaming). • Discharge of pressure washing wastewater from activities other than food/transportation/surface cleaning activities, including engine/equipment degreasing or acid-based cleaning, <i>requires</i> specific authorization and pre-approval <i>prior to each and every discharge</i>. Approvals may be granted on a case-by-case basis and pretreatment standards may apply • Transportation of wastewater on public roads for off-site disposal may require further permitting from other agencies
Hazardous Waste Disposal	Wastewater is classified as a State or Federal hazardous waste because it is: • Ignitable (easily combustible or flammable) • Reactive (undergoes violent or rapid chemical reactions) • Corrosive (burns skin and eyes on contact; dissolves metals; pH ≤ 2 or pH ≥ 12.5) • Toxic (kills fish; contains harmful levels of heavy metals or hazardous substances)	➤ Must transport by a licensed hazardous waste hauler ➤ Hazardous waste generators must arrange for shipment of their hazardous waste to a facility permitted to accept it or, with the appropriate permits, treat it themselves. A person who ships hazardous waste off-site must use a hauler certified by MDE and the waste must be accompanied by a document that tracks it from generation to disposal (the hazardous waste manifest) ➤ For information on regulatory requirements associated with hazardous waste, contact the MDE Solid Waste Program at 410-537-3356