

STORMWATER SAFE CAR WASHING

Cars washed in the street can pollute our creeks and harbours. The wastewater that runs off a car contains a range of substances that may pollute the environment. These include soaps and detergents, mud, rubber and grease.

If these substances enter the stormwater system, they will eventually find their way into our lakes, rivers, and harbours. Stormwater, unlike the water that enters the sewers, does not undergo treatment before it is discharged into our waterways.

Polluting waterways is a breach of the Waste Management and Pollution Control Act and may result in action being taken against the individual or company concerned.

Department Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts receives enquiries from car owners concerned that they may be fined for washing their cars on the street. Car owners want to know how to wash their cars in ways that minimise the impact on the environment.

There are approximately 100,000 vehicles registered in the NT. If every vehicle was washed once a month with 40 litres of water (5 buckets), over 48 million litres of polluted water could enter the stormwater system each year.

Where to Wash Your Car

Wash your car on a grassy area to minimise the runoff. However, if this grassy area is on a nature strip, make sure you are not causing any disruption or inconvenience to pedestrians as this is an offence against by-laws administered by local councils.

Wash your car in the driveway if it drains onto a lawn or garden area. Avoid using the driveway if the run off goes into the street. Always ensure that the area where you wash your car does not drain into the stormwater system, including the drains in the street.

If you have no suitable area to wash your car, look for an alternative location - perhaps your friends or neighbours have a suitable area you can use.

Some service stations provide an area for car washing, where runoff water is contained and treated to remove certain pollutants before it goes into the sewer. There are increasing numbers of purpose built carwash facilities for the public. (see Vehicle/Plant or Equipment Washing/Cleaning Facilities).

When You Wash Your Car

Use a trigger hose - or even better, a bucket to save water.

Use detergents and soaps sparingly. Better still, just use plain water, a coarse sponge and a little elbow grease.

Dispose of wastewater onto a garden or lawn. Consider washing your car only once a month.

Commercial Car Washes

Commercial car wash premises treat wastewater before disposing of it in the sewer. There are also some newer commercial car washes which clean, recycle and reuse water in their 'do it yourself' car

wash bays. These systems use much less water than standard car wash premises and all wastewater is treated before disposal. Check whether your car wash company recycles its water. Car wash companies are listed in the Yellow Pages under motor car cleaning services.

For more information, contact:

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