



Environmentally-Sound Ways To Wash Your Car

Everyone who drives knows how nice it is to drive a *clean* vehicle. And many motorists enjoy washing their vehicles on a warm, sunny day. But some car-washing activities can actually hurt the environment. Soapsuds that run down the curb and into the stormwater drain go right into local waterways, *without* being treated. Even biodegradable soap is toxic because when it enters a waterway and begins to degrade, it uses up the oxygen needed by plants, fish, and other marine life.

Wash and rinse water usually contain pollutants such as soap, oils, and grease, suspended solids, heavy metals, and other toxics. Used motor oil is also bad news for surface water and should be disposed of properly. One gallon of motor oil can make *one million* gallons of water undrinkable! Even small amounts of motor oil can threaten the lives of fish, water birds, insects, and plants, which is why it is essential that motorists keep their cars in good working order and have any oil leaks fixed immediately.

However, there *are* ways to have a clean car without causing any harm. Consider the following options:

1. One of the most environmentally-sound ways to clean vehicles is to take them to a commercial car wash. All commercial car wash sites in Medford drain to the wastewater treatment plant, where water is treated and purified before being released into the Rogue River.
2. Another option is to wash the vehicle yourself, using **no** soap and lots of elbow grease.
3. Yet another alternative would be to wash it yourself with phosphate-free soap, after parking the car on a grassy or gravel area. Plants and soil help filter out the toxins in soap, lessening its impact on the environment, while giving thirsty plants a much-needed drink.
4. Another choice would be to wash the vehicle yourself, using waterless soap that is available commercially. (Internet Site "waterless car wash")

If you choose to wash your vehicle in your driveway, be sure to sweep up *before* you begin, to prevent leaves and debris from being washed into the storm drain. If you must use soap, use one without phosphates, as phosphates can cause excessive algae growth in nearby surface waters. The algae, then utilizes oxygen needed by plants, animals, fish, insects, and other marine life. When the job is finished, be sure to pour the dirty, soapy water down an interior drain – all interior drains channel water to the wastewater treatment plant where it is cleaned before being released into the Rogue River.

So, next time you get the urge to wash your car, remember that whatever flows into the gutter goes directly into nearby streams and waterways. Consider your options, and help save Medford's waterways!

Pick Up The Phone

City of Medford Resources

→	Business License	774-2025
→	Stormwater Information	774-2600
→	Stormwater Rate/Billing Information	774-2100
→	Pollution Complaints/Stormwater Discharge Violations	774-2600
→	Stormwater System Maintenance	774-2600
→	Disposal to the Wastewater Collection System	774-2750

Hazardous Waste/Disposal Alternatives

- *Emergency Spills:*
City of Medford 9-1-1
- *Hazardous Waste:*
See the Telephone Yellow Pages
- *Recycling Services:*
See the Telephone Yellow Pages
- *Discharge Permits:*
Oregon State Department of Environmental Quality 776-6010/X246
Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant 774-2750
- *Storage Considerations:*
City of Medford Fire Marshall's Office 774-2318
- *Technical Assistance:*
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality 776-6010X246