



Make Your Next Car Wash “Environmentally Safe”

Raise money *and* protect Medford’s waterways

THE PROBLEM:

Holding a car wash is a popular way to raise funds for various organizations but all too often, while they help the organization, such car washes hurt the environment. That’s because they are often held in public parking lots that drain into the stormwater system, which leads directly into nearby streams, creeks, and rivers. Soapsuds, oil, grease, and other contaminants are washed into the storm drain and end up polluting local waterways. Putting these materials into the storm drain is the same as dumping them directly into Bear Creek or the Rogue River, or any nearby stream or wetland.

Dirt, grime, oil, soap, and other car wash residuals are harmful to fish, wildlife, and plants that grow in and around waterways. Even biodegradable soap causes trouble because when it enters a waterway and begins to degrade, it uses up oxygen needed by fish, plants, and other marine life. It’s important to avoid using cleansers that contain phosphates, chlorine, chlorine bleach, nitrates, and ammonia.

THE SOLUTION:

By planning ahead, your car wash fundraiser can both be fun and profitable for your organization, as well as respectful of our local water resources. Some options on how to conduct an environmentally friendly car wash are listed below. In all cases, use a flow-control device such as a hand spray with an on/off hose trigger to conserve water.

Option #1 Hold your car wash in a grassy field instead of a paved parking lot

Wash vehicles on a permeable surface such as a grassy or gravel lot, using biodegradable, phosphate-free soap. Soil and plants help filter out toxins before they seep into the groundwater.

Option #2 Hold your car wash on a paved surface near a planting area

Use hay bales or sandbags to divert wash water runoff to a planted bed or landscaped area where the roots and soil can filter out toxins before they contaminate groundwater. Hay bales can also double as comfortable resting places for your patrons to sit while you work on their vehicle. Place a vinyl rug weighted down with sandbags over nearby catch basins to plug them up and prevent pollutants from entering local waterways via the storm water system.

Option #3 Use “waterless” cleaners

Commercially available waterless cleaners are a good alternative and can be located by doing an Internet search on “waterless car wash.”

Option #4 Work with commercial car washes

These facilities have special wash racks that empty into the wastewater collection system. The runoff, along with water from homes and businesses, is treated and purified before being released into the waterways. As a fundraiser for your group, consider selling coupons or tokens that allow customers to have their cars washed at a commercial car wash. The car wash company may even give your group a special rate and/or help publicize your fundraiser event.

Thank you for your help in keeping Medford’s water quality clean. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated by local wildlife, marine life, plant life, and your friends and neighbors, as well as the next generation!

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