Green Country Stormwater Alliance
Give Clean Water a Helping Hand

Partially Funded by Sec. 319(h) Grant

FACT SHEET
COMMUNITY CAR WASH EVENTS

Cars that are washed on parking lots during fund-raising or other community events can pollute local streams and rivers. The soapy water that runs off a hard surface goes into the stormwater collection system which empties into streams. Unlike a home's wastewater, which enters the sewer system, stormwater ***does not*** undergo treatment before it is discharged into waterways.

The pollutants from car washing frequently end up as untreated discharges. These include soaps and detergents, mud, antifreeze, oil and grease, and heavy metals.

Community car wash events, such as for fund raisers, concentrate within a single day dozens of cars being washed in one location. This increases the chances of pollutant runoff into local streams.

If you are sponsoring or participating in a community car wash event, it is recommended that you use the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help minimize environmental impacts from your car washing activities.

- *Wash cars on gravel, grass, or other surfaces that absorb water.*
- *If you must use pavement, try to pick a location where the water runs off into a grassy area at the pavement's edge.*
- *Block off the storm drains to divert water to a grassy area, or use an insert to catch wash water.*

- *Pump soapy water from car wash areas into a sanitary sewer drain.*
- *If pumping into a drain is not feasible, pump car wash water onto grass or landscaping to provide filtration.*
- *Use only biodegradable soaps that are phosphate-free and water based. Do not use petroleum-based or phenolic-based cleaners.*
- *Minimize water usage. Use a spray gun with flow restriction to minimize water usage and runoff. Use hoses with nozzles that automatically turn off when left unattended.*
- *Use buckets for soapy water to "re-soap" rags and sponges rather than adding soap directly to rags or sponges.*
- *Recycle rinse water as wash water.*
- *Use detergents and soaps sparingly. Better still, just use plain water, a coarse sponge and a little elbow grease.*
- *Wash only the car exterior. Do not wash engines, undercarriages, truck cargo bays, or mounted equipment and tanks that may contain toxic materials.*

By following these tips and guidelines, your car wash event will provide an additional benefit to the community – protection of our natural resources and water quality!

For more information, please contact INCOG at (918) 584-7526 or visit the regional stormwater website at www.stormwaterok.net.

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