

# Water Watch



## Car Washing

### Washing the Car

Cars that are washed in the street or on the driveway can pollute our rivers and lakes. The soapy water that runs off the car into the gutters, goes into the storm-water system.

Stormwater, unlike the water which enters the sewers, does not undergo treatment before it is discharged into our waterways. Any pollutants in storm water ends up in our lakes, rivers, or groundwater.

### How big is the problem?

While it may seem rather mundane, the waste water that runs off a car when it is washed contains a range of substances that



may pollute the environment. These include soaps and detergents, mud, rubber, metals, oil, antifreeze, other automobile fluids and grease.

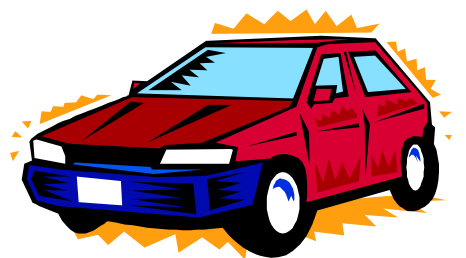
If these substances enter the stormwater system, they will eventually find their way into canals, the Provo River, Utah Lake or wherever the stormwater discharges. In addition, this stormwater has the potential to contaminate groundwater, one of the most important sources of drinking water for the City of Orem

There are approximately 230,000 vehicles registered in Utah County. If every vehicle was washed once a month from April to October with 10 gallons of water each time, nearly 14 million gallons of polluted water could enter the storm water system every year.

### Where to wash your car

If you are washing your car at home, try to wash your car on

your lawn to minimize the runoff. Consider pulling your car onto the lawn or wash your car in the driveway if it drains onto a lawn or garden area. Avoid using the driveway if the water runs into a street.



Always ensure the area where you wash your car does not drain into gutters or storm drains in the street.

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

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*If you wouldn't drink it, don't dump it!*

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We're on the Web!  
[www.orem.org](http://www.orem.org)

## Sweeping vs. Spraying

Having clean driveways and sidewalks is important to most homeowners. Many people use the hose to wash the dirt and grime from their driveway, but this may not be wise. Hosing off the driveway can cause dirt, grass clippings, oil and other automotive fluids, fertilizers, pesticides and a host of other pollutants to be discharged into the street. This can eventually lead to high levels of toxic chemicals in stormwater runoff.



the drought we are having, sweeping saves water for more important uses.

Sweeping out gutters is important as well. The City employs street sweepers that help keep gutters clean. However, due to limited resources, sweepers can only sweep streets once every 4-6 weeks. Plus there are some places that street sweepers just can't reach. Please sweep out your gutters regularly. This will help assure cleaner water in our Rivers and Lakes.

Please sweep your driveways and sidewalks. Your lawn is a great filter for toxic chemicals. Plus, in

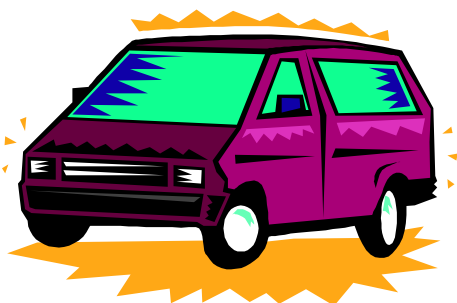
### Car Washing continued

#### When you wash your car at home

Follow some of the following suggestions to minimize the discharge of pollutants and to save water during this time of drought.

Use a trigger nozzle on your hose, or even better, use a bucket to save water.

Use detergents and soaps sparingly. Choose soaps that are biodegradable. Or you might choose to just use plain water, a coarse sponge and a little elbow grease.



Empty your bucket onto your garden or lawn.

Consider washing your car only once a month.

#### Commercial car washes

Using a commercial car wash may also be helpful in limiting pollution and water use.

Commercial car washes treat waste water before disposing of it in the sewer. Also newer commercial car washes recycle and reuse some of the water in their 'do it yourself' car wash bays.

The Clean Water Act requires professional car washes to pipe their dirty water to water treatment facilities or into state-approved drainage facilities designed to protect the environment.

Automatic and self-serve car washes also use water efficient equipment such as computer controlled systems and high-pressure nozzles and pumps, allowing them to clean cars thoroughly while conserving water.

Check whether your car wash company recycles its water. Car wash companies are listed in the Phone Directories Company Yellow Pages under Car Washing & Polishing

#### Sources:

[http://www.stormwatercenter.net/Pollution\\_Prevention\\_Factsheets/CarWashing.htm](http://www.stormwatercenter.net/Pollution_Prevention_Factsheets/CarWashing.htm)

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/envirom/carwash.htm>

<http://www.waterworkscarwash.com/pro.htm>

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[http://wiscassetnewspaper.maine.com/1999-08-19/breaking\\_the\\_law.html](http://wiscassetnewspaper.maine.com/1999-08-19/breaking_the_law.html)