

# Mobile Washing & Stormwater Runoff

*Our Water, Our Environment,  
Our Responsibility!*



*The City of Abilene Stormwater Services Division has prepared this brochure to assist mobile washer operators and property owners in understanding their responsibilities regarding the management of industrial wastewater generated from mobile washer activities. The discharge of wash water to the storm drain collection system is not an acceptable practice and it is the intent of the City to secure full compliance through education of the community and mobile washers and the adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs).*

*Mobile Washer Operator and Facility  
Owner Responsibilities.*

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The City's storm drain system conveys urban and stormwater runoff directly to the creeks in Abilene, and ultimately to Lake Fort Phantom. The storm drain system is not meant to collect any residential or industrial wastewater at any time. Use of the storm drain system to discharge residential or industrial wastewater is a violation of City Ordinance.

Federal, State, and local regulations make it unlawful to release non-stormwater discharges to the storm drain system. Wash water originating from mobile washer activity is classified as industrial wastewater and must never be allowed to enter the storm drain. The wash water often carries with it pollutants such as suspended solids, oil and grease, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, and other organic matter. The person who generates and releases such discharge may be held responsible for failing to observe these regulations.

Additionally, the City may also hold the facility owner responsible for failing to protect their connection to the storm drain system. Notice of violations may be imposed if such illicit discharges are discovered. Thus, facility owners should ensure that they only contract with reputable mobile washers who demonstrate full knowledge of their responsibilities and compliance with the law.

## *What is Mobile Washing?*

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Mobile washing has recently become a growing industry throughout the United States, Texas, and Abilene. There are various mobile washing services, which may include:

- Exterior building or house washing
- Sidewalk or parking lot cleaning
- Brick or stone restoration
- Wet sandblasting
- Environmental fleet washing
- Graffiti Removal

## *Pollutants from Mobile Washing*

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These activities can produce pollutants that can ultimately drain into local creeks and lakes. Some examples of chemicals, compounds, and substances contained in industrial wastewater as a result of cleaning operations are:

- Caustic (high pH) or acidic (low pH) water-based cleaning compounds.
- Toxic organic compounds contained in cleaning solvents and paint strippers.
- Toxic substances such as automotive fluids (e.g. motor oil, gasoline, antifreeze, brake fluid, and transmission fluid) and heavy metals such as zinc, copper, and lead.
- Biodegradable wastes such as oil and grease, yard clippings, and discarded food.
- Aggregate runoff such as silt, gravel, and litter.

## *Best Management Practices*

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The following practices are intended to aid the mobile washer prevent the entry of industrial wastewater into the storm drain system and thus maintain compliance with stormwater regulations. These practices are also intended to ensure that the resulting industrial wastewater meets the standards for sewer discharge, if applicable.

- Walk the area to be cleaned prior to the start of the job and identify all area drains, yards drains, emergency drains, drainage channels, and sumps where wastewater could be released to the storm drain system.
- Block or seal off all identified release point using sand bags, plugs, rubber mats, vacuum boxes, containment pads, or temporary berms.
- Sweep all surfaces prior to washing so as to minimize the amount of debris (soil) and grit contained in the resulting industrial wastewater.
- Collect all trash, litter, and debris from the area and place in a proper trash bin or waste receptacle for disposal
- Use absorbents such as mats or pads, rice hull ash, cat litter, vermiculite, or sand to soak up spilled liquids.
- Sweep, vacuum, shovel, and/or wipe up these saturated absorbents and dispose of properly.
- Screen all chemicals and compounds used for cleaning and eliminate the use of those that contain toxic organic compounds, heavy metals, high levels of phosphates, or very high/very low pH.

*Best Management Practices (cont.)*

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- Conduct mobile washing in accordance with all operating instructions provided by the equipment supplier. Maintain equipment in good working order and routinely check and test all safety features.
- Utilize all-purpose absorbent booms at the discharge point to the storm drain system to remove pollutants from wastewater.
- Collect the industrial wastewater for discharge to the sewer system. A simple and acceptable collection method only requires a drain plug to prevent release to storm drain, a small sump pump, and a hose fitted with a filter sock to prevent discharge of suspended solids. Sewer access, in order of preference, includes:
  - Use of a permitted sand trap, clarifier, sink, or clean-out stub at the facility where the cleaning operation occurs.
  - Off-site transport of the wastewater to the mobile washers' facility for sewer discharge via a permitted connection.
  - Off-site transport of the wastewater to a third-party facility such as a car wash or other mobile washer for sewer discharge via a permitted connection.
- Ensure that the wastewater temperature is less than 140° F prior to sewer discharge.
- Filter the wastewater if it contains a large amount of suspended solids that could cause sewer blockage.
- Maintain a logbook of all discharges.

# **For Information and Assistance**

## **City of Abilene**

Stormwater Services Division  
P.O. Box 60  
555 Walnut Street, Ste. 207  
Abilene, Texas 79604-0060  
(325) 676-6281  
[www.abilenestormwater.com](http://www.abilenestormwater.com)

## **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – (Region 3 Local Office)**

Stormwater & Pretreatment Team  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
1977 Industrial Boulevard  
Abilene, Texas 79602  
(325) 698-9674

## **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – (State Office - Austin)**

Stormwater & Pretreatment Team  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 13087, MC-148  
Austin, Texas 78711-3087  
(512) 239-4671

## **Web sites**

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
[www.tceq.state.tx.us](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us)

Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)