Suggested Information for Outdoor Washing of Vehicles and Other Household Items with Soaps, Solvents or Detergents

Outdoor washing of vehicles and other household items can result in soaps, solvents and other detergents entering the storm drain system and our local waters. The dirt and materials being washed off can add additional pollutants to the wash water. Soaps, detergents, and pollutants washed from vehicles can harm fish and other aquatic organisms by their toxicity to those organisms, by reducing oxygen levels, and by increasing acidity.

Here are ways to reduce the water quality impact of outdoor washing:

* Sweep out or clean off heavy sediment and debris manually before washing
* Wash on gravel, grass, or other permeable surface to reduce wash water entering the storm drain
* Use hoses with nozzles that automatically turn off when left unattended
* Use as little detergent or chemical as possible; use no detergent for a quick rinse down
* Use only biodegradable soaps and detergents
* Use a car wash for engine cleaning and vehicle degreasing

Wash water that enters a storm drain is untreated and flows directly into local waterways.