



# Outdoor Pressure Washing

## Why be concerned?

Pressure washing is an effective way to clean buildings, pavement and equipment. However, it also dislodges pollutants such as paint chips, sealants and automotive fluids and carries them into drainage systems that lead directly to local surface waters. Acids and other cleaners used when pressure washing are also carried with waste water to our rivers and streams.

Businesses that wash equipment or vehicles outdoors are to follow State and local ordinance requirements. In view of state permit requirements and potential threats to the environment, vehicles not washed *indoors* should be taken to a commercial washing facility. For more information about washing equipment and vehicles see **Series #3, Fact Sheet 3.2.**



## Take the Pressure Out of Washing

Use dry cleaning methods such as absorbents, brooms or wire brushes to clean pavement, buildings and equipment whenever possible. Prior to pressure washing, mechanically remove loose debris before applying water. Collect the dislodged material and dispose of it in an approved manner. To determine the proper disposal method, contact your trash hauler or the facility where the waste will be taken.

## Managing Wash Water

- Contain wash water by temporarily blocking all storm drains (for example, with rubber mats) and constructing a berm around the area (for example, with sandbags). Then, pump or divert wash water to the sanitary sewer system. Check first to make sure that it will meet waste water treatment plant requirements, by contacting the Cobb County office of Environmental Compliance. Be sure to remove debris and reopen storm drains as soon as possible – don't block storm drains if rain is expected.

- Alternatively, divert wash water to an open lawn or other vegetated area so that it can filter into the ground. Avoid compacted soils and make sure the area's large enough to completely contain wash water. *If this method is used, wash with water only. Be aware that dislodged pollutants or any cleaning products that are used can filter through to drinking water supplies.*



- Don't discharge wash water to roadside ditches. These are part of stormwater drainage systems, which lead directly to local rivers and streams.

- Cobb County does not allow commercial or industrial facilities to use cleaning products outdoors. Contain the washwater and contact a commercial waste hauler for disposal.



## Cleaning Up Solids

Sediment and other solids that remain on the ground should be cleaned up immediately to prevent them from blowing or washing away. To determine how to dispose of these solids, contact your trash hauler or disposal facility.

## GETTING HELP

Cobb County of  
Environmental Compliance.....(770) 528-3340

Cobb County  
Stormwater Management.....(770) 419-6435  
Water Quality Section.....(770) 419-6441

Community Partners for  
Healthy Streams .....(770) 528-1482