



Exterior Cleaning and Powerwashing for Contractors

Guideline

Revision Date: 3/17/22

Applies To: University of Michigan contractors

Wastewater from outside cleaning activities such as car washing, equipment cleaning, building and window cleaning, powerwashing, and masonry cleaning can cause impacts to surface waters when it is allowed to discharge to the storm water system. In addition, residues left behind by these and other activities can be carried to surface waters by storm water runoff and impact soils adjacent to the cleaning activity.

Washing with Additives (such as soap or other chemical cleaners)

Contractors can use one of the following options to handle discharges of wastewater from powerwashing activities when working on the U-M campus.

- Obtain an approval from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) to discharge to the ground by “authorization by notification” as a mobile power washer. Additional information can be found in [EGLE Power Washing Guidance](#).
 - Discharge to ground means discharge to grassy or soil areas capable of water infiltration at the time of discharge.
 - When cleaning do not allow runoff discharged to ground to leave the site or enter any drains.
 - Do not discharge when the ground is frozen. The wastewater will either freeze, run off into the storm drains, or both.
 - If operations will occur during winter or frozen conditions, the wastewater **must** be collected and sampled to determine proper disposal (option below).
- Collect wastewater into compatible containers and coordinate with EHS Hazardous Materials Management (HMM) (734) 763-4568 to manage the waste.
 - Contact HMM during the planning stages of the project to ensure HMM has available containers and enough time to sample, analyze, and dispose of the wastewater.

NOTE: Protect storm drains and catch basins to ensure there is no discharge of wastewaters into these systems during exterior cleaning, power washing, or wastewater collection activities.

Washing with No Additives

When washing outdoors and no additives will be used, follow the requirements for discharge to ground from outdoor washing activities:

- Use potable water as the water source for washing
- Limit washing to the removal of dirt from the exterior of a vehicle, equipment, or a stationary source such as a building
- Block building footer drains and storm drains within and adjacent to the cleaning areas as needed
- Insert filter fabric or sediment control sacks in the storm drains within and around the cleaning area
- Empty the filter fabric or sediment control sacks around the cleaning area as needed

NOTE: Washing of the undercarriage of a vehicle or equipment is prohibited.

Washing and Creating Potentially Hazardous or Contaminated Wastewater

If the surfaces to be cleaned contain lead based paint or other chemicals or residues, the wash water will likely need to be collected for proper disposal. Contractors **must** write a wastewater management plan and contact the U-M EHS Environmental Protection and Permitting Program (EP3) at (734) 647-1143 to review and approve the wastewater management plan, if the washing activity is in regards, but not limited, to:

- Using high pressure water to strip/remove paint from surfaces
- Stripping paint from buildings with solvents and spraying them clean
- Degreasing equipment with solvents and spraying them clean
- Using caustic or phosphorus containing cleaners

NOTE: EP3 needs **at least two weeks** to approve the plan prior to beginning work.