

While we know that water pollution can originate from an industrial discharge or a sewage treatment plant, much has been done to clean up these “point sources” of pollution.

What many people don’t realize, however, is that, “nonpoint source” pollution—which originates from many diffuse sources all over our watershed—is the main cause of water pollution in our coastal waters. One of the major contributors to nonpoint source pollution is stormwater that runs off yards, streets, parking lots, and buildings.

Water from storms picks up sediments and contaminants as it runs off streets and the landscape. Common pollutants include fuel, and other fluids from vehicles, wash water, construction debris, sediment, landscaping runoff containing pesticides or weed killers, and motor oil, antifreeze, and paint products that people pour into a street or storm drain. This polluted runoff—also called “stormwater pollution”—flows to the storm drain system and empties directly into our creeks and sloughs, which flow to Humboldt Bay and the ocean. Storm drains are separate from our sewer systems, and flows into our creeks and waterways **UNTREATED!**

Stormwater runoff is very expensive to treat. Treatment facilities have to be very large to treat peak storm flows. The best way to protect our creeks and improve stormwater quality is to start at the source. Please don’t let runoff water get polluted in the first place. To protect our creeks and waterways, only rain should be going down the storm drains, but we all need to do our part.

Spill Prevention & Control:

- Before spills occur, have spill prevention and cleanup materials near by.
- Proper materials for containment and cleanup of different spills include; rags, absorbents (such as cat litter or rice hull ash), absorbent pads, oleophilic pads (absorb oil but not water), drip pans, absorbent booms to contain spills, and storm drain covers.
- Fix your vehicle leaks. Automobile fluids leaked onto streets get washed down storm drains when it rains.

Special thanks to the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA) and the Cleaning Equipment Trade Association (CETA).



For questions call:

City of Arcata Environmental Services
(707) 822-8184

Humboldt Waste Management Authority
(707) 441-2005

CalRecycle
1-800-RECYCLE

North Coast Stormwater Coalition Region-Wide Hotline

1-877-NCSC-001 1-877-627-2001
www.HumboldtStormwater.org

Department of Toxic Substances Control
Hotline
(800) 728-6942



City of Arcata Residential Auto Cleaning Guidelines



For Water Quality Protection



Environmental Services
736 F Street
Arcata, CA 95521
(707) 822-8184

eservices@cityofarcata.org
www.cityofarcata.org

Dry Cleanup:

In many cases you can eliminate the need to collect and/or divert waste water if you follow this two-step process:

1) Use absorbents (such as rags, absorbent mats or pads, rice hull ash, cat litter, sand or vermiculite) to pick up small amounts of wastewater or spilled cleaning and detailing products.

2) Sweep or vacuum saturated absorbents. Dispose of saturated material appropriately in the trash or as hazardous waste, checking the disposal instructions on the product label(s).



Vacuuming:

Depose of debris in a trash container. Do not sweep debris into the street.



Carpet Cleaning:

Foam carpet cleaners are recommended by most detailing experts. These cleaners are easily contained; however, care should be taken that no residues are washed into storm drains.

Floor Mats:

If washing mats outside of the car, wastewater must be contained and disposed safely to a sanitary sewer or grassy area where water will soak into the ground. Wash water must go to the sink, toilet, or tub connected to the sanitary sewer or a grassy area where water will soak into the ground; and must not be washed into the street or storm drain.

(What not to do) ➡



Vinyl:

Products for cleaning vinyl surfaces, such as; dashboards and interior doors, may use biodegradable cleaning products, but even these are harmful to fish and other aquatic life, and are not permitted down storm drains.

(Protect our Storm drains, & don't dump!)



Glass Cleaning:

Most glass cleaners contain ammonia which is harmful to fish and stimulates abnormal algae and plant growth. Some cleaners also contain alcohol and a variety of detergents. These materials are not allowed down storm drains, as they are harmful to fish and aquatic life. Use rags to pick up spilled glass cleaner.

Wet Cleanup:

If wet clean up methods are used and there is sufficient water volume to reach a storm drain, plug the storm drain; and pump the water to a sanitary sewer inlet or storage tank. A catch system, including a sump pump and a collection mat under the vehicle, is a typical and effective way to collect wastewater. A storage tank (usually 55-gallon) collects the water delivered by the pump and contains it safely for later disposal into a sanitary sewer inlet.

Another option is to direct wastewater to a landscaped, dirt or gravel area. Be aware that wastewater may adversely affect landscaping. Check the slope and other physical characteristics of the area to avoid runoff to the street, storm drain or other outside drain. Wastewater should be directed onto an area large enough to contain all of the water. If the soil is dry, wet it down before discharging to help wastewater soak into the ground.

Remaining Soapy Water in Bucket

Should be discharged to a sink, toilet or tub connected to the sewer. If a sanitary sewer inlet is not available, this small quantity of wastewater may be distributed over a dirt or gravel area.

