



REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION: A GUIDE FOR MOBILE AUTO REPAIRERS AND DETAILERS

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Keeping our waterways clean and saving water is everyone's business.

The amount of oil, grease, and other pollutants that wash off car service locations into stormwater drains can be extremely damaging to the environment. The commercial car maintenance industry is responsible for keeping pollutants from their sites out of the stormwater system and reducing the amount of water used for washing cars.

This fact sheet explains how mobile auto repairers and detailers can meet their environmental responsibilities.

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is surface water runoff captured from rain events.

The stormwater system is the gutters, drains and pipes that collect rain runoff and take it to the nearest creek, river, lake or bay. For the most part, stormwater carries with it a range of pollutants and litter from our gutters and roads, and is not treated before it gets into our waterways or coastal waters.

Stormwater pipes are quite different from sewerage pipes, which take domestic and industrial sewage to wastewater treatment plants.

Historically, our stormwater systems were designed primarily to prevent flooding. Today, stormwater is considered as a valuable water resource and is often collected and used for many domestic, commercial and industrial purposes.

How do mobile auto repairers and detailers contribute to stormwater pollution?

The risk of stormwater pollution from mobile car repairing and detailing can be considerable, unless some simple measures are put in place to prevent it. Litter, grease, oil, detergent, paint, metals and other waste from mobile car repairing and detailing can cause pollution if they get into the stormwater system. Oil is particularly dangerous because it takes only one litre of oil to make one million litres of water (equivalent to an Olympic swimming pool) unsafe for aquatic and marine life.

Urban stormwater pollution is the biggest source of pollution into Port Phillip Bay. In many instances, urban stormwater is also a significant source of pollution to rivers and lakes across Victoria. It can affect the quality of our seafood, the places we swim and the water we drink and use in our homes.

Why is proper stormwater management important to my business?

Safety: Cutting the risk of pollution and spills helps keep every workplace safe and reduces exposure by your staff to potentially hazardous substances.

Saving time and money: Every spill or discharge from a workplace is a waste of materials that you have paid for. Your business may also face the cost of cleaning it up. One way or another, stormwater pollution is money down the drain.

Because it is the law: Wastewater from commercial/industrial washing of vehicles and equipment indoors and outdoors is considered industrial waste. Many liquid and solid wastes from a range of commercial and industrial activities are also prescribed industrial waste (eg oil and oil filters). Under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* it is an offence to discharge industrial waste to the stormwater system.

because this is our home



How can I avoid polluting stormwater?

Before you start:

- Educate staff about preventing stormwater pollution.
- Before you start work, identify stormwater entry points at each job.
- Portable bunds and a spill kit should readily be available to quickly respond to accidental wastewater runoff or oil spills. These can be purchased at many retail stores. Look up the Yellow Pages for your nearest supplier or make an internet search, for example on 'bundling'.
- Make a plan to deal with spills. Ensure everyone on site knows what to do in the event of a spill. If you allow liquid or solid wastes to enter the stormwater system, you may be prosecuted under the *Environment Protection Act 1970*.

Washing/detailing of vehicles and equipment:

- If you need to wash cars with detergent, you should only do so by placing a mobile wash mat under the car, to collect the wastewater either for disposal to sewer or for reuse via a tank. Look up the Yellow Pages for your nearest supplier or make an internet search, for example on 'collapsible bunding'.
- You should contact your local water authority to find out whether you need a trade waste agreement to discharge liquid waste to your client's sewer (via their toilet or sink).
- If wastewater cannot be collected, cars should be washed with a minimum amount of water, and only on an unsealed surface (eg grass or gravel). You should not use any detergents, including biodegradable detergents, for washing, as these pollute our waterways.

- Runoff of any wastewater and liquid or solid waste into the stormwater system must be avoided.

Vehicle repair:

- Undertake vehicle repairs under cover where possible.
- Use spill trays under work areas to collect oil and other fluids.
- Maintain and regularly clean machinery, to quickly identify potential leaks.
- Control airborne sprays so they cannot land on areas where rain can wash them down the drain.
- Waste oil, used oil filters and waste solvents are prescribed industrial waste under the *Environment Protection (Prescribed Waste) Regulations 1998* and must therefore be collected for recycling. Generators of prescribed waste must ensure that the waste is sent to a facility that is licensed by EPA to further treat, recycle or dispose of this waste. Go to www.sustainability.vic.gov.au to locate your nearest recycling facility and to www.epa.vic.gov.au to look up EPA-certified waste transporters and facilities that accept prescribed industrial waste. They are also listed in EPA publication 813 'Waste Management Guide – List of Accredited Agents'.
- Solid wastes such as car batteries should also be collected and recycled. Go to www.sustainability.vic.gov.au to locate your nearest recycling facility.
- Solid waste such as packaging for spare parts and used paper towel can be disposed of in your client's rubbish/recycling bins.



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