



REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION: A GUIDE FOR AUTO REPAIRERS, AUTO DETAILERS AND CAR YARDS

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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 sites into stormwater drains can be extremely damaging to the environment. The commercial auto 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 auto repairers, auto detailers and car yards 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 auto repairers, auto detailers and car yards contribute to stormwater pollution?

The risk of stormwater pollution from car maintenance, detailing and repairing can be considerable, unless some simple measures are put in place to prevent it. Litter, grease, oil, detergent, paint, thinners, metals and other waste from 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.

How can I avoid polluting stormwater?

Construction of a new car yard:

- Install an automatic stormwater diversion system for your site that alternately diverts water to the stormwater system or to the sewer system. When high-pressure washers are activated, as well as at the beginning of a rain event, the system automatically diverts wastewater/first-flush water into the sewer system. All other times, surface runoff is diverted to the stormwater system. A stormwater diversion system also offers a range of possibilities to easily collect stormwater for use on site, which will reduce your water bill considerably.
- Obtain a trade waste agreement from your local water authority before you start discharging wastewater to sewer.

because this is our home



Existing car yards:

Before you start work on your site:

- Mark the stormwater entry points on your site to ensure that they are not used for waste disposal.
- All stormwater pits surrounding your premises should be fitted with sediment traps.
- Educate staff about preventing stormwater pollution.
- Portable bunds and spill kits 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 search the internet for '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*.
- Store chemicals, paints, oils, detergents and other liquid materials, as well as car batteries, in a roofed and bunded area. EPA publication 347 *Bundling Guidelines* provides further information, and can be downloaded from EPA's website www.epa.vic.gov.au.
- Separate your waste for recycling and provide waste bins with lids to avoid litter from blowing around.

Washing/detailing of vehicles, equipment and workshop floors:

- Only undertake car detailing activities and the washing of equipment in a roofed and bunded wash bay that is connected to the sewer system via a water/oil separator under a trade waste agreement with your local water authority.
- When you wash cars in a wash bay, ensure that the detergents you use are biodegradable. This will help the performance of the wastewater treatment plant located at the end of the sewer system to perform better, as biological degradation of detergents through microorganisms ('bugs') will be much more rapid.
- If you do not have a wash bay on site, you should not wash any vehicles and equipment on site. Instead, take vehicles and equipment to a commercial wash bay. The only exception is already detailed cars that are on display (eg in a yard). These may be washed with a minimum amount of water that is sufficient to remove dust. Cars on display should not be washed with detergents, as these will end up in a waterway, lake or bay. This also applies to

biodegradable detergents, as these have a negative impact on waterways as well.

- If you still need to wash equipment on site from time to time and you cannot do it off site, you should only do so by placing a mobile wash mat underneath, 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'.
- If you need to wet-clean your yards and workshop floors, you should make sure that all wastewater is discharged to the sewer system via a water/oil separator, under a trade waste agreement with your local water authority. Otherwise, you should dry-clean only (ie sweep).
- Runoff of any wastewater and liquid or solid waste into the stormwater system must be avoided.

Vehicle repair:

- Undertake vehicle repairs under cover.
- 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 including car batteries and packaging material should also be collected and recycled. Go to www.sustainability.vic.gov.au to locate your nearest recycling facility.



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