

# Tips on proper cleaning and disposal methods

## Avoid using soap!

- Even biodegradable soap is harmful to the environment. Before you use soap, test to see whether hot water under pressure will do the job.

## Dry cleanup methods

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

1. Use absorbents (such as rags, absorbent mats or pads, rice hull ash, cat litter, vermiculite, or sand) to pick up greasy or oily spills.

2. Sweep or vacuum to pick up litter, debris, or saturated absorbents

- Waste materials from dry cleanup such as absorbents, paint chips, etc. may often be disposed of in the trash. Check with the local solid waste authority to be sure. Rags may be sent to an industrial laundry.

## Screening wash water

- When cleaning surfaces such as buildings and decks without loose paint, sidewalks, or plazas without soap, thorough dry cleanup should be sufficient to protect storm drains. However if any debris could enter storm drains or remain in the gutter or street after cleaning, wash water should first pass through a “20 mesh” or finer screen to catch the material, which should be disposed of in the trash.

## Collecting wash water

- A simple and acceptable method for collecting wash water on private property requires only a drain plug, small sump pump, and a length of hose. If a small parking-lot- type catch basin is available, remove the grate, plug the drain pipe (usually 2, 3, or 4 inches in diameter), and place the pump in the catch basin, attached to a garden hose. As wash water drains to this lowest spot, pump to landscaping, a sewer line cleanout, or a container for later disposal to the sewer.

- Vacuum booms are another option for capturing and collecting wash water.

## Directing wash water to landscaping

- When routing wash water to landscaping, check the slope and area to be sure to avoid runoff into a street or gutter. If the soil is very dry, wet it down thoroughly before discharging so that wash water will soak into the soil instead of running off to the street, gutter, or storm drain.

## Blocking storm drains or containing wash water

- Sand bags can be used to create a barrier around storm drains.

- Plugs or rubber mats can be used to seal storm drain openings.

- You can also use vacuum booms, containment pads, or temporary berms to keep wash water away from the street, gutter, or storm drain.

## Hazardous waste disposal

- Be sure to read cleaning product labels before disposing of wash water. Follow use and disposal instructions carefully

- Check with the city or county environmental health department to find out how small businesses can dispose of hazardous waste at a drop-off event (instead of hiring a hazardous waste hauler). In general, you must generate less than 27 gallons or 220 pounds of a particular type of waste each month to qualify to use these “Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generator” (CESQG) programs.

## Equipment and supplies

- Special materials such as sheets of absorbent, storm drain plugs and seals, small sump pumps, and vacuum booms are available from many vendors. For more information check catalogs such as Pigalog (800-468-4647), Lab Safety Supply (800-356-0783), C&H (800-558-9966), and W.W. Grainger (408-433-9889), or call the Cleaning Equipment Trade Association (800-433-9889) or the Power Washers of North America (202-393-7044).

**Remember, sending water that contains soap or any other type of pollution to a storm drain or water body violates state and/or local regulations!**