

## Car Washing and Water Quality

As summer quickly approaches I'm sending a quick reminder about washing your car in Edmonds. Car washing in Edmonds is not illegal, however **discharging soapy, dirty washwater into the storm drain** is a violation of federal, state, and City regulations. The storm system in Edmonds carries **untreated runoff** from streets and parking lots and discharges it into our lakes, streams, wetlands and Puget Sound.



### **What's the problem?**

Car washwater and rinse water contain a mixture of soaps, oils, heavy metals and other crud that we wash off

from our vehicles. Once the washwater reaches the street it flows into storm drains, which then flow into Edmonds' streams, lakes and Puget Sound. This soapy, polluted water is harmful to aquatic plants and animals.



### **What about soaps?**

Soaps can harm fish and other aquatic life by breaking the surface tension of water and lowering the oxygen level. Avoid soaps that contain phosphates, which can cause unwanted algae blooms in surface waters, which further lower oxygen levels when they die.

Instead, use biodegradable or "green" soaps. Even these soaps, however, are harmful to aquatic life and water quality, so please use soap sparingly.

### **What can you do to keep our waters clean?**

- Take your car to a commercial car wash - it uses less water while more effectively cleaning your car. And the water is reused and eventually sent to the sanitary sewer plant for treatment.
- When washing your car at home, wash it on a lawn or gravel area, or direct the soapy wash water to a lawn or gravel area. And don't forget to use a shut-off nozzle to conserve water!
- Use waterless car wash products, available at auto parts stores and online.



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