

# Pressure Washing Surface Treatments

## Pressure Washing

Exterior cleaning and maintenance are necessary to keep buildings in good condition and maintain curb appeal. However, many of the activities involved in the process can result in water pollution if proper precautions are not taken. Pressure washing buildings and pavement dislodges pollutants such as oil, paint, sealants and debris. These materials, in addition to any detergents, solvents or other chemicals used for cleaning, can flow untreated into storm drains if preventative measures are not taken. Allowing wash water or debris generated from washing activities to go into a storm drain pollutes local streams and is a violation of local, state and federal law.

- Avoid pressure washing and stripping. Use mechanical cleaning methods such as sweeping or scraping (wire brushes). Water is conserved and the sweepings can be placed in the trash.
- If pressure washing occurs, manage wash water appropriately by:
  - Minimizing the volume of water used.  
Installing absorbent booms at storm drain inlets to prevent wash water from entering.
  - Using sand bags or other materials to divert runoff to a grassy or vegetated area that does not drain directly to a storm drain.
  - Using cleaners sparingly, if at all. If chemicals, solvents or hazardous materials are used, the wash water should be contained and disposed of properly.
  - Call the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services Industrial Waste Section at 703-550-9740 ext. 252, TTY 711 for information on the proper disposal of the wash water, or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/wastewater](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/wastewater).
  - Removing chemicals, solids or other pollutants through simple pretreatment steps (e.g., settling and removing solids in a bermed area or container).
- Plug or place covers over drain openings during cleaning to avoid discharging pollutants to the storm drain.
- Clean up remaining residue or debris by sweeping. Otherwise, the next time it rains these materials will be picked up and transported to nearby storm drains.



### TROUBLED WATERS

Wash water runoff containing paint or concrete residue from pressure washing can substantially raise the pH of stream water, potentially killing fish and other aquatic life.



### DO YOU KNOW?

Cleaning chemicals may damage or kill plants and animals when they enter the water. Soaps and detergents may damage fish gills and skin.

## Surface Treatments

Surface treatment is often necessary to protect surfaces from wear and weathering. Wood preservatives, pavement sealing and other outdoor surface treatments commonly contain metals, solvents or chemicals that are hazardous materials. Handle and dispose of hazardous materials properly. For more information about proper disposal of household hazardous waste and business (commercial hazardous waste, please refer to [www.knowtoxics.com](http://www.knowtoxics.com) or [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/hazardous-waste](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/hazardous-waste).

- Apply only as much of the chemical as needed or the surface can absorb.
- Soak up excess chemicals and spills with absorbent material or rags. Do not allow chemicals to flow into a storm drain or soak into the soil. Dispose of rags and absorbent material properly after cleaning up. If nonhazardous, dispose of the rags in the trash. Properly dispose of rags contaminated by hazardous waste.
- Prevent pavement sealants from reaching storm drains. Use absorbent booms to block storm drain openings.
- Prevent roof preservatives or sealants from entering gutters by lining the gutters with rags. If nonhazardous, dispose of the rags in the trash. Properly dispose of rags contaminated by hazardous waste.
- Prior to treating a surface, sweep thoroughly and remove loose particles and then wash with water if necessary.
- Avoid surface treatment activities when the forecast calls for rain.

Information on the Stormwater Ordinance Chapter 124 can be found on the following website: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/stormwater/stormwater-management-ordinance](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/stormwater/stormwater-management-ordinance)



Apply only as much of the chemical as needed or as much as the surface can absorb.



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