



GWINNETT COUNTY  
WATER RESOURCES | STORMWATER  
**A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO HIRING A PRESSURE  
WASHING CONTRACTOR**

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Gwinnett County's streams are under pressure from pollution. According to the EPA, 80 percent of water pollution in the United States is not caused by pollution from large industries, but rather by the combined effect of numerous smaller pollutant sources that are placed, spilled, or dumped onto the ground or into storm drains. These pollutants are then carried by these storm drains into local creeks and streams when it rains.

The inappropriate disposal of wash water generated during pressure washing contributes to this water pollution. In addition to cleaning chemicals, wash water often also contains pollutants such as oil and grease that are removed during the cleaning process. To prevent water pollution this wash water must be controlled and collected for proper disposal. Unfortunately, many pressure washing contractors still allow this waste to drain illegally into the storm drains that connect directly into the creeks and streams in our communities.

Gwinnett County's Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connection (IDIC) Ordinance prohibits the discharge of anything other than stormwater into a storm drain or waterway. Maximum penalties for violation include a \$1,000.00 fine and/or 60 days in County jail.

#### **Water Quality Guideline: Surface Cleaning**

To address this source of pollution and provide guidance to the pressure washing industry, Gwinnett County has worked with the industry group Power Washers of North America to develop an operating guideline for surface cleaning. This guideline describes environmentally responsible cleaning procedures and details practices that should be used in managing polluted wash water.

If the area to be cleaned is polluted in any way and/or the contractor plans to use a chemical (including environmentally friendly" or "biodegradable" detergents) to assist with cleaning, the guideline requires that the resulting wash water be managed. Management will likely involve wash water surface flow controls and/or collection equipment. Depending on the type of wash water, disposal options will include on site disposal or removal for disposal offsite at an approved facility.

Less stringent guidelines apply to circumstances where an unpolluted surface is to be cleaned with water only.

Pressure washing contractors operating within Gwinnett County are expected to comply with the ordinance and follow the adopted industry guideline. Copies of these documents are available online by visiting Gwinnett County's Surface Cleaning Web page. Please see the back of this brochure for directions on accessing these documents.

#### **What Can I Do?**

The management of polluted wash water often requires the use of specialized equipment. Not all contractors have this equipment and may not be able to comply with the law.

As a consumer who employs pressure washing contractors, you can have a significant impact on the prevention of water pollution by simply choosing a contractor who follows the guidelines. Keep in mind that as the consumer, you may also be held responsible for illegal discharges that occur on your property.

#### **Enforcement**

If you witness the uncontrolled discharge of polluted wash water into a storm drain, please report the individual or company by calling 678.376.7000 (24- hours/day). Please include as much information as possible in your report, including a description of the individual(s), vehicle, discharge location, and photographs if available. Vehicle markings, including tag numbers, are also very helpful. By preventing the pollution of our waterways, we can positively affect the quality of the water that we all use for fishing, recreation, and drinking.

Should you have any questions or comments on this topic, please call during office hours and ask for Gwinnett County's Stormwater Management Division at 678.376.6700.