

Car Care for Cleaner Water

Did you know . . . 4 quarts of oil can form an 8 acre oil slick if dumped or spilled down a storm drain?

That's because storm drains found in our streets and yards lead directly to our wetlands and streams. So, oil and dirty water from washing our car that goes into storm drains pollutes our water.

What can you do? Simple.

Take your car to the carwash where the dirty water is treated before it gets to our water.

Wash your car on your lawn or direct the dirty water towards the lawn and away from the storm drain.



Keep your car properly tuned.

Recycle used fluids and never dump them down the storm drain.

Help keep the oil where it belongs . . . in your car.

We all know that cars cause air pollution. But did you know that cars also cause water pollution? As we drive, our cars and trucks leave bits of tires, brakes and rusty metal on the street. When we park, our cars and trucks leave stains of oil, grease, and transmission fluid on driveways and parking lots. Less visible are the tiny exhaust particles that gradually settle out of the air or come down with the rain or snow.

What happens to all this "car dirt" when it rains? Rain and melting snow wash auto pollutants off the pavement, down the gutter, and into storm drains. Under these drains are storm sewers – pipes that carry the dirty water to lakes, streams or wetlands.

Even on sunny days, polluted water often flows out of storm sewers. To understand why, take a walk to a small stream in your town. Do you see mounds of foam? Streaks of blue? An oily sheen?

The foam may come from soapy water that runs down the street when we wash cars in our driveways. The bright blue streaks are probably antifreeze drained from radiators. The oily sheen may come from used motor oil dumped down the storm drain.



You can help stop this kind of pollution. Explain to your family and friends that storm sewers carry water directly to our wetlands and streams. They do not connect to wastewater treatment plants.

Simple Steps To Care For Your Vehicle

1. Recycle Oil

Old motor oil can be reprocessed and used again and again. Just put it in a container with a tight lid such as a plastic jug or metal can, and take it to a community oil recycling center. Don't pour anything else in with the oil because contaminated oil cannot be recycled.

Recycling is the only safe way to get rid of used motor oil. Never use old oil to kill weeds or to oil roads. Oil poured down the storm drain ends up in our lakes and streams. The five quarts from your car could create an oil slick the size of two football fields or pollute a million gallons of drinking water.

Anything dumped into a storm drain flows directly to a nearby stream or lake.



2. Keep Your Car Tuned Up

Cars that run smoothly burn less fuel and causes less pollution. A tuned-up car saves you money by using up to 20% less gasoline. Regular tune-ups also reduce the amount of hydrocarbons, nitrous oxides and other pollutants that come out of your car's exhaust pipe. These chemicals pollute our water as well as our air.

Hydrocarbons can cause cancer and nitrous oxide is one of the ingredients in acid rain. Acid rain increases the toxicity of other pollutants in street runoff, which adds to the risk of sickness or death for fish and other aquatic life.



3. Repair Leaks

Spots on your driveway or garage floor mean the engine, transmission or radiator in your car is leaking. Have the leak repaired right away. Then clean up the spot by using cat litter or another absorbent material to soak up the spill.

Sweep up the cat litter and put it in a sealed bag in the trash for disposal. Do not scrub the spot with detergent and wash the dirty water into the street.

Remember, all that dirty water ends up in our wetlands and streams.

4. Recycle Antifreeze

Recycling antifreeze can be a challenge. A few recycling sites now have separate tanks for antifreeze collection. Check with your local gas station or auto repair shop – they may accept used antifreeze. Used antifreeze should not be flushed down the drain because it has pollutants that may cause problems for sewage treatment plants or septic tanks.

Antifreeze is very poisonous to people and animals. Because of its sweet taste and smell, antifreeze may attract children or pets and other animals. Drinking only three ounces may kill an adult and even less will kill children or pets.

5. Substitute Shoveling for Salt

Salt may be an easy way to get rid of snow and ice, but it pollutes wetlands, streams and groundwater. It also kills trees and grass as well as corroding auto bodies, metal bridges and underground cables. Shovel your driveway and sidewalk before the snow gets packed down and icy. If the pavement is still slick, use sand or sand mixed with salt to provide some traction and melt the snow. After the snow melts, sweep up the sand to keep it out of storm sewers and waterways.

IT ALL ADDS UP

**By following the simple steps listed above,
we can all help reduce the pollution that comes from
our cars, streets, driveways and parking lots.
Together, our actions will add up to cleaner water
for us and our children.**