

BEST PRACTICES



Cleaning Your Carpets or Pressure Washing Your House this Spring?

Make Sure You Keep It Green When You Clean!

There's something about spring that makes many people want to jump into action and clean. Before you do so, here are some tips to help make sure you protect local water quality while you clean.

Over time, carpets can collect much more than dirt. Dirty wash water from carpet cleaning can contain a variety of harmful pollutants such as soap, oil, dirt, grease, carpet fibers, heavy metals and other toxic chemicals (even if you use biodegradable carpet cleaning supplies). It may seem like a good idea to dump the dirty wash water into the street or down the storm drain, but most stormdrains lead to local waterways. Dumping polluted water into storm drains can affect water quality and harm wildlife. And, it is illegal to dispose of dirty wash water into storm drain systems. Fines can be issued for such illicit discharges.

So what should you do with the wastewater from carpet cleaning? If you are connected to a sewer system, you can dump the dirty water into a sink, toilet, tub or shower drain. Pour the dirty water through some type of filter to keep carpet lint and other debris from clogging your drains. If you are connected to a septic system, **DO NOT** pour the wastewater down a drain, as the wash water can harm your septic system. Instead, pour the wastewater in a graveled or landscaped area (away from drinking wells, septic systems and vegetable gardens). If you are hiring a company to clean your carpets, ask them about their disposal plan. Carpet cleaning companies should dispose of the wastewater at proper sewage disposal sites.

Pressure washing painted structures, such as houses, sheds and garages, can cause paint to flake off. To help keep debris and pollutants out of storm drains when pressure washing follow these tips:

- Use the least amount of water possible
- Avoid using hazardous cleaning products (such as ones that contain bleach, sodium hydroxide, hydrofluoric acid, etc.)
- Place a filter over nearby storm drains to prevent paint chips from going down the stormdrain
- Sweep or rake up debris, trash and paint chips from pressure washing and dispose of in garbage

If you are pressure washing driveways or sidewalks, make sure you direct the spray toward a vegetated area and away from storm drains or drainage ditches (drainage ditches are connected to the stormwater system). Use the least amount of water possible, and avoid using hazardous products. Better yet, skip the pressure washer and use a broom to sweep up debris.



Part of what makes Thurston County such a wonderful place to live is the creeks, rivers, inlets and lakes found throughout the county. When you stop to make sure you keep it “green” when you clean you are helping to protect these precious resources.

It is illegal to dispose of dirty wash water into the storm drainage ditches, stormdrains and stormwater ponds. To report a spill or illicit discharge, call the WA Department of Ecology 24 hour Spill Hotline: 360-407-6300.

Source: Stream Team News, Spring 2014