

Mobile Cleaners Water Pollution Prevention Self Quiz

Answer Sheet

1. **Except in San Francisco, Bay Area storm drains flow directly to local creeks, the Delta, and the Bay – with no treatment.**

Answer: True! In some older cities (including San Francisco), “combined sewer systems” do treat runoff – except during storm conditions, when the whole system is liable to overflow. This is not the case in the rest of the Bay Area, where storm drains flow directly to the Bay or Delta.

2. **Wash water poured down a sink, toilet, or cleanout goes to a sewage treatment plant where many pollutants are removed.**

Answer: True! (Except in some rural residential areas where residences are on septic tanks.)

3. **You must protect nearby storm drain inlets when pollutants are present in the wash water.**

Answer: True!

4. **Biodegradable soap can harm fish and wildlife.**

Answer: True! Biodegradable doesn't mean non-toxic!

5. **What sorts of pollutants come from mobile cleaning activities?**

Answer: All of the answers are correct. Soaps, detergents, and solvents, motor oil, grease, and other auto fluid residues, dirt and silt, paint chips, and grease and other food waste all cause problems when they reach a creek, the Delta, or the Bay.

6. **What happens when polluted wash water reaches a creek, the Delta, or the Bay?**

Answer: All except d are correct. Polluted wash water threatens the health of fish, shellfish, birds, and insects. Algae and other fast-growing water plants may “bloom” in the water body, blocking sunlight and using up oxygen when they decompose. Scum, foam, and oily waste collect on the surface of the water or build up in a dry creekbed where it will cause problems in the rainy season. Dirt, sand, and litter introduced to a natural system through the storm drain system make the water turbid and can smother natural habitats.

7. Wash water containing soap may be discharged to . . .

Answer: Landscaping, or the sanitary sewer system. Not to a storm drain! Even biodegradable soap is toxic to wildlife and aquatic organisms in a stream or the Bay or Delta.

8. Wash water enters storm drains from . . .

Answer: Driveways, streets, gutters, parking lot drains, and curbside storm drain inlets are all designed to send rainwater through the storm drainage system to a creek or the Bay or Delta.

9. When can wash water be allowed to flow to a storm drain?

Answer: b and c are correct. You may allow wash water to flow to a storm drain if you have not used soap or other chemicals, if you swept the area first, and if the water was used to clean sidewalks, plazas, or building exteriors with no flaking paint.

10. Send wash water to the sanitary sewer through a . . .

Answer: Sink, toilet, and cleanout are all correct. Discharging into a manhole can be dangerous, and is often illegal. Besides, it can be hard to tell whether a manhole is part of the storm drain system or sanitary sewer.

11. How do you get permission to dispose of wash water in the sanitary sewer system?

Answer: Call the local wastewater treatment plant. Policies vary from plant to plant, so it's wise to check.

12. What sorts of hazardous waste can surface cleaning generate?

Answer: All are correct.

13. Whose responsibility is it to dispose of wash water properly?

Answer: The cleaner and the property owner share legal responsibility for waste generated on the property cleaned.