



# Technical Brief

Technical and Management Updates

## New Hampshire DES Vehicle Washing Policy To Be Modified

### Summary

In response to changes in federal stormwater regulations that brought many municipal vehicle maintenance facilities under new regulations, the state of New Hampshire is revising their policy on vehicle washing to address “rinsing” of vehicles. The purpose of the policy is to potentially reduce costs for some municipalities by allowing limited washing activities for highway and other vehicle maintenance facilities. Many highway departments have been installing wash bays that are either tied in to the sewer or to a tight tank in response to these regulations. Although the original regulations prohibiting discharge to groundwater or surface water have been around for some time, they have only recently been enforced on municipalities.

### The Existing Policy

The current DES policy allows facilities the following options for handling vehicle wash water:

1. Closed System. Store wash water in a DES registered holding tank pumped and disposed at an approved disposal facility.
2. Sewer Discharge. Register the vehicle wash system with DES. Pretreatment may be required depending on the local sewer authority.
3. Groundwater Discharge Permit. Discharge to the ground requires a groundwater discharge permit. Expensive treatment, monitoring and testing requirements may be included.
4. Wash fewer than 30 vehicles per week. Discharge to the ground may be allowed without a groundwater permit if: a) groundwater Best Management Practice (BMP) rules at Env-Ws 421 are followed; b) floor drains (if any) are registered with DES and are not in an area where regulated contaminants are used/stored; c) wastewater is not from power washing, steam, engine, or undercarriage cleaning; d) wastewater contains NO soaps or other products which contain regulated contaminants; e) there is no surface water discharge; f) wastewater discharges to the ground surface; g) it contains only non-emulsifying detergents; h) if inside a building, the wastewater goes through an oil-water separator first; and i) the wastewater is registered with DES Env-Ws 1508.01.

Discharging vehicle wash water to surface waters is generally not an option due to the difficult permit requirements for surface water discharges.

### The Anticipated Modification

The new policy is expected to allow municipal entities, particularly highway garages, to rinse the exterior of vehicles outdoors to remove dust, dirt, and salt. The discharge of “dust water”, as DES calls it, from rinsing activities will be allowed to the ground surface for onsite infiltration as long as the following conditions are met:

- The rinse area must be registered with NH DES as part of the non-domestic wastewater registration.
- Detergents cannot be used.
- High-pressure water and/or steam cannot be used.
- Engine or undercarriage rinsing is not allowed.

The DES contact is Mitch Locker (603)271-2858.

Comprehensive Environmental Inc. has assisted dozens of municipalities with facility assessments and development of cost-effective strategies for environmental compliance. Contact Rebecca Balke, P.E. at 603-424-8444 X308.