



**Water Pollution Control  
in the Autobody Shop**

**Water Usage in the  
Autobody Shop**

When one thinks of water pollution control in an industrial setting, autobody shops don't usually stand out as major violators in the eyes of environmental regulators. That isn't to say, however, that autobody shops are waterless operations. Aside from the typical shop procedures of frame straightening, grinding and sanding, and spray painting, a car that has undergone autobody repair must be washed before it is returned to the customer. In fact, a car must also be washed before any body work can be performed on it. Another typical procedure in an autobody shop that requires water usage is wet sanding. With the creation of wastewater in an autobody shop comes the inevitable question of how to dispose of it all.

**The Rules and Regulations  
That Hold Water!**

**1) No Drain, No Pain**

The easiest way to avoid a wastewater problem in your shop is to not create one in the first place. It is a fact that the most commonly found wastewater violation in an autobody shop (or in any industrial operation, for that matter) is open floor drains. The mere presence of open floor drains gives a regulatory inspector an indication that something is being washed down them.

If an open floor drain does not lead to the city sewer system or a holding tank, or if there is no apparent need for the drain, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) recommends that it be permanently sealed.

However, if you choose to empty wastewater into your shop's open floor drains and the drains are not sewerred, you must follow strict wastewater sampling and monitoring methods as provided under the rules of DEM's Underground Injection Control (UIC) program. This is to ensure that wastewater discharges to the underground (or "subsurface"), by way of (for example) a dry well or septic system, do not have the potential of polluting the soil and groundwater. (Note: Contact the UIC program at (401) 222-6820 for approval to seal or use existing floor drains).

By contrast, sanitary wastes, such as kitchen and bathroom wastewater, are acceptable to discharge to the sewer or septic system. Drains in these areas, however, are not to be used for the disposal of hazardous, industrial, or other shop wastes. By law, floor sweepings, such as sanding/metallic dust, or any other autobody shop wastes, are strictly prohibited from being washed down open floor drains and must be disposed of in accordance with federal, state, or local solid and hazardous waste regulations. If you need help in complying with proper autobody waste disposal procedures for your shop, contact DEM's Office of Technical & Customer Assistance at (401) 222-6822. This new office offers free confidential and non-regulatory support to help businesses understand regulations that could affect them as well as technical assistance which could improve businesses' bottom line.

**2a) What Won't Wash with  
the Regulators  
(a.k.a., "a Pain in the Drain")**

In general, any discharge to your sewer or septic systems (other than sanitary wastes) is not allowed unless it has been permitted from the state environmental agencies' (i.e., DEM, Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC)) or your city government's water quality regulatory programs. Discharges to the groundwater or waters of the state (i.e., any surface waters) are also strictly prohibited.

**2b) What Will Wash with the  
Regulators - What to Do with  
Carwash Wastewater**

Taking the car to the carwash is an important ritual for most of America's car owners. Carwashing is also an essential ritual in the business of autobody repair. As is necessary in commercial car washing operations, wastewaters created in the preparation and finishing processes of the autobody repair must have a way of exiting the premises in a practical and legal manner.

Bearing this in mind, the State of Rhode Island has permitting mechanisms for the discharge of wastewater from commercial carwashing operations. Whether your business falls under the jurisdiction of DEM, NBC or your local Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF) or Publicly Owned



Treatment Facility (POTW), it is necessary to obtain a process wastewater discharge permit. Some of the application requirements for this permit include submitting the following items:

- √ Plans and schematics of the proposed operation
- √ A Spill Control Plan
- √ A Toxic Organic Solvent Management Plan
- √ Plans for a Process/Pretreatment System. Pretreatment may be necessary for the removal of solids and grit and should also include the installation of an oil and grease separator. In addition, an appropriate pretreatment system must be able to prevent the discharge of the following materials to the sewer system:

- Solvents
- Antifreeze Solutions
- Degreasing Solutions

- Solutions with a pH lower or higher than your local authority
- Sludges
- Waste Oils

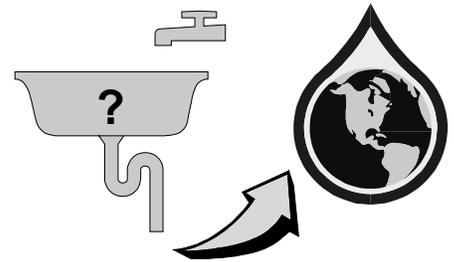
Each water quality regulatory agency has a list of parameters (e.g., metals, fat-derived compounds, Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons (TPH), etc.) and discharge limitations which must be complied with at all times.

Other conditions of the wastewater discharge permit that must be adhered to include periodic sampling, monitoring and inspection, and recordkeeping.

In a nutshell, *a*) vehicle washwater and rinsewater, and *b*) wastewater from maintenance floor washing in the carwashing stage of the autobody repair can be discharged to the sewer system or a holding tank under the authority of your local water quality permitting agency.

## Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention in the Autobody Shop

Many commercial carwash operations today have inground systems which capture and recycle wastewater. These types of systems demonstrate good pollution prevention practices, because they conserve clean water usage, reduce wastewater discharge, and save money for a company's bottom line. It makes sense, therefore, that a wastewater recycling system should be taken into consideration as providing an environmental, as well as economic benefit for the carwashing operation in an autobody shop.



## Avoid Unnecessary Violations ...Follow the Regulations!

The key to staying out of trouble with the DEM, NBC, or your local water quality authority is to keep the lines of communication open with them. They can keep you up to date on the latest environmental requirements in the industry, and can "arm" you with accurate regulatory information.

Following is a list of RIDEM-approved POTW Industrial Pretreatment Programs and their contacts. If your shop drains are on sewers and you are not located within any of these jurisdictions, contact your town water quality program for guidance:

<u>POTW</u>	<u>CONTACT PERSON</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
Bristol	Bill Rabideau	253-8877
Cranston	Al Tutela	861-5990
E. Greenwich	Joe Macari	886-8649
E. Providence	Gerald Wolniewicz	435-6368
NBC (see below)	Tom Uva	461-8848
(Serving Pawtucket, Central Falls, Providence, North Providence, Johnston, Lincoln, Cumberland, a small portion of Smithfield, and the Rumford section of East Providence).		
Newport	Roy Anderson	846-2321
	Maria Broadbent	849-2380
RI Port Authority (Quonset Industrial Park)	Ray Pezzello	222-3134
Smithfield	Al Tutela	861-5990
S. Kingstown	Peter Bates	788-9771
Warwick	BettyAnne Rogers	739-4949
West Warwick	Mike Souza	454-7000
Westerly	Glenn Hedman	348-2561
Woonsocket	Mike Connolly	766-0555

**If you need assistance in complying with any of these requirements or would like information on how practicing pollution prevention can help to reduce your regulatory burdens, you can call DEM's Office of Technical & Customer Assistance at (401) 222-6822.**