

WATER & LAND

Car Wash Sludge Fact Sheet



Car wash sludge refers to the material that collects in the grit traps, mud traps, and sumps of car washes. This material mainly consists of dirt, sand, grit, grime, and other substances that are washed off the outside of vehicles. This sludge is potentially a solid waste or hazardous waste and subject to DEQ waste disposal requirements.

Car wash grit trap sludge is not sludge generated from other washing and rinsing activities, such as:

- Pesticide vehicle/equipment cleaning
- Engine cleaning/degreasing
- Tanker truck cleaning
- Chemical container rinsing
- Livestock vehicle washing

Sludge generated from the above listed activities is subject to more stringent disposal requirements, as specified by OAC 252:515, and its disposal may also require a wastewater permit from the Water Quality Division.

Car wash operators have two options for disposal of car wash sludge. It may be disposed of at any facility that is permitted to accept it. It may also be used as fill material if it falls below the screening levels listed in Table I, in which case the sludge would be considered “uncontaminated material”. The car wash owner is responsible for assuring that the sludge is “uncontaminated material” before it is used as fill material. DEQ requires that the car wash owner have the sludge tested prior to being used as fill material. Once a batch of sludge from a facility has been classified as “uncontaminated material,” then all future batches will be deemed “uncontaminated material” unless there is reason to suspect that something other than car wash residue may be in the sludge. If a car wash operator has reason to believe that a hazardous substance is present in the sludge, it should be tested for that substance prior to disposal. However, DEQ recommends that

car wash operators periodically test the sludge before disposal.

All testing of car wash sludge must be done by the State Environmental Lab (SEL) or a DEQ-accredited private lab. You may

Table I: Screening Levels Applicable to Car Wash Grit Trap Sludge

Arsenic	29 mg/kg	Lead	400 mg/kg
Barium	1,600 mg/kg	Selenium	5 mg/kg
Benzene	0.03 mg/kg	Silver	34 mg/kg
Cadmium	8 mg/kg	Toluene	12 mg/kg
Chromium	38 mg/kg	TPH	50 mg/kg
Ethylbenzene	13 mg/kg	Xylenes	190 mg/kg

These screening level values only pertain to car wash sludge used as fill material and are not applicable levels for residential property or industrial sites where workers are likely exposed. Any approvals for car wash sludge to be applied to residential property or industrial sites will require different screening levels.

contact the SEL at (405) 702-1000 for additional information.

Car wash sludge used as fill material must not contain any free liquid and the placement of car wash sludge should not result in liquid runoff from the site into nearby streams, rivers, ponds, or lakes. Application of car wash sludge as fill material is not allowed at the following locations:

- Within 100 feet of any surface waters (lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands, intermittent streams, creeks, etc.);
- Within 500 feet of any surface source of drinking water;
- Within 300 feet of any public or private groundwater well;
- Within 10 feet of the property line;
- In areas of parks or recreation areas that are frequented by the public, such as picnic areas or campgrounds; or
- In any area frequented by children (schools, day care centers, playgrounds, etc.).

If you have questions about the disposal of car wash sludge, please contact the Environmental Complaints and Local Services Division at (405) 702-6100.

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