We’re Glad You Asked!!

Here at the City of Grand Junction, we sometimes find that incomplete stories or misinformation about the work we do circulates throughout the community. The misinformation may begin with a news story, an entry in a blog, a column in a printed publication, information on someone’s website, or simply in the course of normal conversation. From there it travels. Our challenge is that we rarely get the opportunity to respond before misinformation spreads. We would like to take this opportunity to address some questions you have asked.

Since when has power washing become illegal?

Power washing, also known as pressure washing, is not illegal, but there are regulations under the Federal Clean Water Act that do regulate how you must properly dispose of the water that is created when you power wash. Both individuals and businesses are responsible for knowing these regulations and following them to avoid fines.

The City of Grand Junction’s Stormwater Pollution Prevention Ordinance went into effect January 1, 2006 as mandated by the federal Clean Water Act. These federal regulations are designed to improve water quality in rivers and streams by reducing the amount of pollutants carried to the river.

Too often, we find that businesses are unaware of their responsibilities under this ordinance to prevent stormwater pollution. The dirty water that is left after power washing is classified as “process” water and often contains mud, soap, dirt and grease. It is against the law to dispose of this water by washing it into the street where it gets washed into the City’s storm drain system. Water entering the storm drain goes directly to the Colorado River, and is not treated. When power washing vehicles, houses, or even greasy restaurant equipment, the waste water must be contained and disposed of following all state, county and municipal regulations. If the surfaces being washed are exposed to precipitation only, the water can be discharged to land if done properly by following Colorado Department of Health regulations.

Many businesses are approached by local companies offering to wash the cars of employees at their place of employment. Property owners
Pressure washing your vehicle results in grease, oil and often soap in the dirty water. This water should not be washed down the storm drain since it ends up in the Colorado River. Wash your vehicle on your lawn or take it to a professional car wash that will properly dispose of this dirty water. We live in a wonderful environment in Colorado, but unless we are careful, we can pollute our rivers and streams. Information on stormwater regulations is available on the 5-2-1 Drainage Authority website at www.521.org and details on the proper disposal of power washing process water is available on the CDPHE website at http://bit.ly/wa6WTT.

Therefore, before you agree to hire a company to power wash your vehicle, house, restaurant equipment, or anything else, make sure you ask questions about how that process water will be disposed of. There are many reputable local companies who have purchased the equipment needed to dispose of process water legally and safely.

The 5-2-1 Drainage Authority was created in 2004 to administer federal stormwater regulations. The 5-2-1 Drainage Authority is made up of five entities— the City of Grand Junction, Mesa County, the City of Fruita, the Town of Palisade and the Grand Valley Drainage District. The 5-2-1 Drainage Authority is responsible for investigating illegal dumping, erosion control during construction and post-construction, public education on stormwater quality, and municipal mapping of the drainage system and outfalls.

The 5-2-1 Drainage Authority can issue stormwater violations that can result in fines of up to $1,000 per violation per day, and up to one year in jail.

For further information, contact the 5-2-1 Drainage Authority hotline at 970-263-8201 or email us at 521da@gjcity.org.