

Car Care

You might be wondering how a car pollutes lakes and rivers. After all, you don't drive them in the water. Try answering these questions. What happens if oil, grease, or transmission fluid leaks a little on your driveway. What about tiny bits of tires, brakes and rusty metal that falls off when we drive? Where do you think the tiny exhaust particles from your car wind up? If your answer is "our lakes and rivers," you are right.



All of these pollutants wash off the car and get carried along on rain and melting snow. They head down the street into the gutter, and into storm drains. Where do the storm drains lead to? You guessed it---lakes, rivers, and streams.

How can you and your family help "curb" pollution as you take care of your car? Follow these simple steps to cleaner water.

Recycle oil. Old motor oil can be reprocessed and used again and again. It should be recycled and never, ever, poured down a storm drain where it winds up in your local lake or stream. Did you know that five quarts of oil from a car can create an oil slick the size of two football fields or pollute a million gallons of drinking water?

Use commercial car washes instead of washing your car at home where the soapy water heads down the storm drain. (At a commercial car wash, the water runs into a sewer system where it is treated at the sewage treatment plant.)

Soap can act like a fertilizer when it gets into a lake. This causes weed and algae growth. When the weeds and algae decompose, they use up the oxygen needed by fish. If your family really wants to wash the car at home, have your mom or dad drive it onto the lawn or onto a gravel drive. That way the water will soak into the ground and the soil will filter out most pollutants.

Repair leaks. Keep your eyes open for spots on your driveway or garage floor. If you see some, it means that the engine, transmission or radiator in your car is leaking. Tell your parents so that they can get the car repaired right away.

Substitute shoveling for salt. When Wisconsin winter winds blow, bringing snow to your driveway and sidewalk, use your muscles, not salt to clear them off. Throwing

down salt may be an easy way to get rid of snow and ice, but it pollutes lakes, streams and groundwater. It also isn't good for trees and grass. If you can shovel your driveway and sidewalk before the snow gets packed down and icy, you won't have to use salt. If the pavement is still icy, use sand or sand mixed with salt to provide traction and melt snow. After the snow melts, sweep up the sand to keep it out of storm sewers and waterways.

Drive less. One of the best ways to prevent pollution of both air and water is to drive less. Can you carpool to school with a friend? Or, if you get up a few minutes earlier, can you bike or walk to school instead of getting a ride? How about running to the store for just a couple of things? Can you walk? Going to play at a friend's house? Hop on your bike or put on your tennis shoes. Not only does walking and biking help reduce pollution, but it keeps you in great shape too. As the saying goes, "just do it."

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