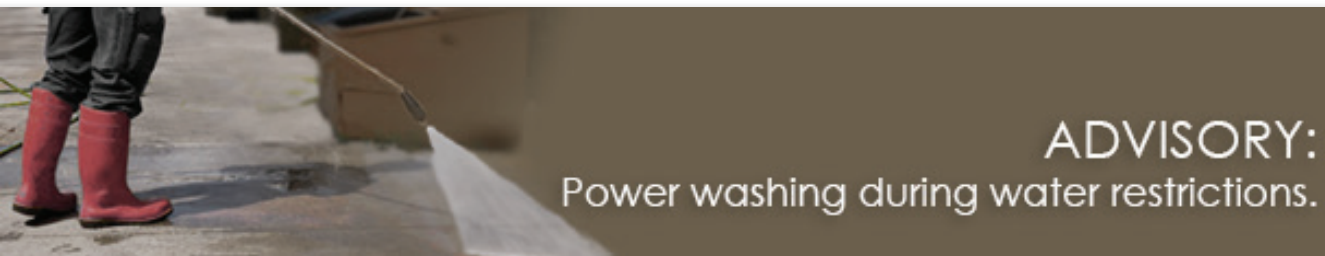


Water Restriction Advisory - July 20, 2015

ADVISORY



ADVISORY:

Power washing during water restrictions.

Recent water restrictions have given way to increased attention paid to the use of water, especially “power washing” activities.

Metro Vancouver outlines when private power washing is allowed and indicates that during:

•**Stages 2-3:** “Only for health & safety purposes or to prepare a surface for painting or similar treatment. Washing for aesthetic purposes is prohibited. Private pressure washing prohibited in Stage 3.”

•**Stage 4** “All forms of hosing of outdoor surfaces are prohibited unless ordered by a regulatory authority for health & safety reasons.

It is important to note two very important facts in this case:

1. “These restrictions apply only to the use of treated drinking water. The Water Shortage Restriction Plan (WSRP) restrictions do not apply to the use of rainwater, gray water, or any forms of recycled water.”
2. Contrary to the Metro Vancouver guidelines, at this time WorkSafeBC is unable provide an “order” to bypass the water restrictions. Orders are generally issues as a corrective action to reduce a hazard, not as a prevention measure.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the **Water Shortage Response Plan**.

What does this mean for our industry?

- We need to ask basic questions on regarding the use of power washing during water restrictions.
- Why is it necessary to use this method during the water restrictions?
- Is there an opportunity to use a different location that does not require washing to be completed?
- If not, is there an opportunity to access a water source that is not treated drinking water?
- Has the employer completed a “written hazard assessment” outlining why the area has to be pressure washed?

Basic answers to the questions should be:

- Power washing is necessary to ensure that workers do not come in contact with human waste and other biological hazards found in the workplace. The only approved methods of cleaning this type of waste is with the use of water and power washing.
- Following the [Hierarchy of Controls](#), other locations should be reviewed as possible alternatives. If there are no suitable alternate locations, this should be documented.
- Power washing vendors should be asked to attempt to secure water sources that are not obtained from treated drinking water. The employer should have this information documented.
- A documented hazard assessment must be completed outlining the need for pressure-washing using treated drinking water. The city of San Francisco faced a similar situation with the state of California's water restrictions but deemed it to be a matter of health and safety when attempting to clean large quantities of human waste and biological hazards from the streets.
- Although WorkSafeBC will not issue an order for the use of power washing the streets to make the workplace safe for workers, it is the employer's responsibility to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of their workers. An argument can be made that the judicious use of power washing during water restrictions is a justified preventative measure to protect workers.

As in all matters of Health and Safety, the key is due diligence. Has the employer taken all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of their workers? This is achieved by documenting the steps that were followed to show all reasonable precautions have been taken.

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