



City of Guelph Outside Water Use By-law

Outdoor Cleaning Activities

This fact sheet addresses:

- residential and non-residential sidewalk and driveway washing; and,
- other outdoor washing (both residential and non-residential) including window washing, building cleaning, outdoor furniture cleaning, etc.

Extent of End Use in City of Guelph

There is no hard data on the extent of outdoor washing in Guelph. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the volumes of water consumed by such activities are modest.

With respect to sidewalk, patio and driveway washing, a typical garden hose consumes in the order of 20 or more litres or more per minute. (The precise volume varies depending on local water pressure and plumbing configuration.) A person using a simple hose will consume about 1.2 cubic metres (m³) or more in an hour, which is likely at the upper end of how much time would normally be dedicated to this task. Assuming that most people do this very rarely - a few times a year (or never), this supports the conclusion that total water used by this activity is minor. While some homeowners or businesses might wash down hard surfaces more often, even weekly, this would be a small minority.

With respect to other outdoor cleaning activities such as window washing or building cleaning, total water use from these demands will be even less significant because these activities are carried out infrequently (e.g. annually or less often) or because water is only used for short durations.

Best Management Practices for Efficient Use

Efficiency of outdoor cleaning activities can be greatly improved through simple measures:

- most obviously, using a broom to sweep driveways and sidewalks eliminates water use entirely;
- cleaning windows with a bucket and squeegee is more efficient and less messy than using hose mounted tools;
- similarly, residents can be encouraged to use buckets of soapy water for most other cleaning activities instead of freely spraying with a hose;
- in cases where residents do want to continue to use a hose, they can be encouraged to do so less frequently or to use a pressure washer if possible.

High Pressure Washing Is More Efficient



Source: Wikipedia

Residents are often surprised to find out that cleaning with a pressure washer is typically more efficient than using a simple garden hose with a spray nozzle. This is the case for two reasons. First, they put water under pressure so can clean four to five times faster. Homeowner models are up to 40 times more powerful than ordinary garden hoses. Professional grade models are up to 75 times more powerful.

Second, pressure washers use less water per minute than unrestricted hoses. A typical electric model aimed at homeowners (at 1600 to 2000 PSI) sold at major retailers uses 4.8 to 5.7 litres per minute (compared to around 20 litres per minute from a typical hose). Gas powered models for the homeowner market use in the range of 8 to 9 litres per minute (at 2600 PSI). Even gas powered professional models (see image, right) use in the range of 15 litres per minute (at 3800).

Typical Gas Powered Pressure Washer



Source: Wikipedia

In sum, best practice involves cleaning outdoors with water less frequently or with “low tech” methods like brooms and buckets. Residents can also use pressure washers when the job demands more intensive scrubbing.

Contribution to Overall Outdoor Water Use

Indicator	Impact
Portion of customers that practice the end use	Medium
Average volume of water used each time the end use is practiced	Small
Average frequency with which customers practice the end use	Infrequent
Contribution of end use to overall outdoor consumption	Low