

Quick Facts

# CAR WASH

for Cities



Brought to you by the SCWA  
Conservation Alliance

## Top 10 Water Usage Facts

1. The average professional car wash uses LESS water than many other businesses in a community.
2. In most cities, car washes are not even in the top 1000 largest water users.
3. In fact, the average professional car wash uses LESS than 0.2% of the total municipal water supply.
4. Residential water usage averages 60-70%, of which lawn watering accounts for over 50%.
5. A conveyor or tunnel car wash uses 30-40 gallons of water and is able to process cars efficiently and quietly.
6. A self service car wash typically uses 17-18 gallons of water per car.
7. An average shower uses 35-40 gallons of water, and a top load washer uses 35 gallons of water per clothing load.
8. Individuals washing cars in their driveways or the many charity car washes you see on parking lots are using 100-140 gallons of water per car with an open hose.
9. Professional car washes capture 99% of water used and either recycle the water or replenish city water supplies.
10. Water conservation and efficiency are just good business and economic sense for car wash operators.

Supporting data available at <https://swcarwash.org>.

## Noise Myths

Although sound levels within a car wash site have long been characterized as loud, washes are not substantially louder than many other everyday sounds. Individuals working in the blower room for any length of time are advised to wear ear protection, in accordance with government guidelines, but the danger from passing exposure to these noise conditions appears to be minimal and comparable to other sounds in urban areas. The following chart is instructive:

Very Loud	120 dB	Jackhammer
	110 dB	Rock music
	100 dB	Subway train
Potentially Damaging	90 dB	Bass drum
	80 dB	Loud Radio
	70 dB	Hairdryer
Moderate	60 dB	Conversation
	50 dB	Heavy Rain
	40 dB	Moderate Snoring
Faint	30 dB	Quiet Office

### Car Wash Blowers Sound Levels:

At Nozzle	86 dB
5' Inside	85 dB
10' Inside	82 dB
Exit Door	74 dB
5' Outside	74 dB
20' Outside	66 dB
40' Outside (Ambient)	64 dB

Increasing distance from blowers  
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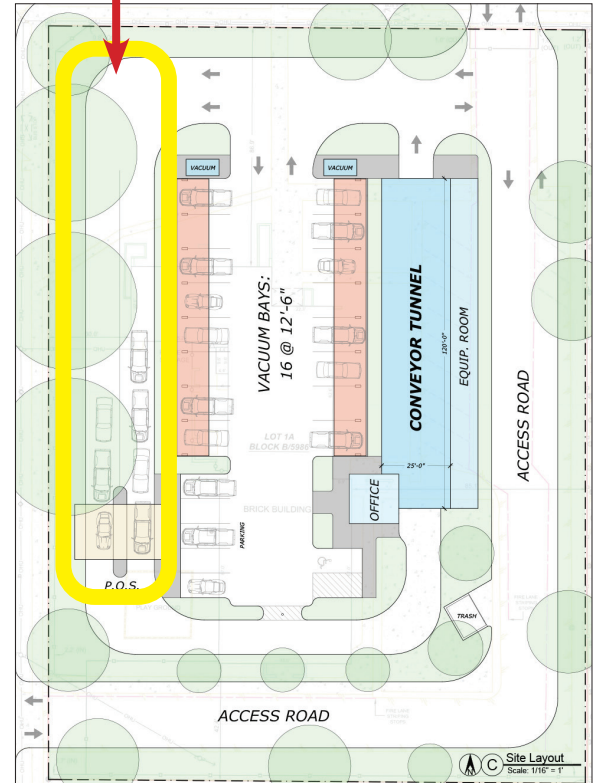
Supporting data available at : [https://assets.lawrenceks.org/agendas/cc/2018/03-20-18/pl\\_sup-17-00690\\_noise\\_study.pdf](https://assets.lawrenceks.org/agendas/cc/2018/03-20-18/pl_sup-17-00690_noise_study.pdf)

# Traffic & Stacking

It is common practice for car wash developers to plan carefully for stacking, as industry research has established that long lines of idle cars deter potential customers. Thus, operators have a strong incentive to plan for and build out proper stacking for cars in development sites.

## How to Spot a Good Operator

- **Hours of Operation:** Are the hours of operation clearly identified onsite in marketing materials and online?
- **Professional & Manned Site:** Automation is common in the car wash industry, and modernized washes can often process cars with minimal labor on site. It's a good practice for sites to have a manager or assistant manager and at least one attendant on site to address customer needs, safety issues, and cleanliness.
- **Music & Noise Policy:** To ensure customers and neighbors enjoy a peaceful environment, car wash operators are encouraged to limit loud music and noise on site.
- **Thoughtful Stacking:** Most cities have car stacking requirements. Good operators are all about efficiency and providing clean, shiny, dry cars FAST. To do so, they want to provide as much stacking as possible, often exceeding the minimum requirements set by cities.
- **Policy on Employee Uniforms:** Site employees and management should be clearly identifiable to customers and public employees via proper uniforms.
- **Owner Involvement & Proximity to Site:** Is the owner or a representative close by and available for after hours or weekend issues?
- **History of Community Involvement:** If the operator has other sites, has he or she been involved in the local community around those sites?



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