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## Drop the Anchors: Washington State reportedly bans copper in brake pads to... save the fish?

by [Chris Shunk](#) ([RSS feed](#)) on Apr 16th 2010 at 7:20AM



Brake pads utilize copper because it helps dissipate heat, and keeping brakes cool is a very good thing. But every time a driver hits the brakes, tiny fragments of copper and other metals settle on the roads and surrounding areas. When it rains, that copper could end up in our waterways, polluting our water and potentially killing off wildlife.

*Fox News* reports that the state of Washington is looking to put an end to its copper pollution problem by cutting down the acceptable amount of the metallic element in brakes sold in the state to just five percent by 2021. Currently, copper levels can be 25 percent or more. Copper will be eliminated altogether by 2023 if OEMs and brake suppliers can figure out a way to make that happen. Automakers and suppliers have used copper in brakes since asbestos was smartly banned from our stoppers back in the early 1990s.

So why concentrate on automakers to cut down on copper pollution? Non-profit Sustainable Conservation claims 530,000 pounds of copper pollution enters San Francisco Bay per year, and one third of that number could come from brake pads. Washington ecologists reportedly agree with the one-third figure as well, stating that 70,000 to 318,000 pounds of copper enter Puget Sound each year. The remaining sources of copper pollution include copper pipes, building materials and paint.

While adding a couple dozen tons of copper to our waterways sounds anything but good, researchers reportedly haven't come up with any widespread issues caused by man-made copper runoff. But government scientists claim that even low levels of copper can, for example, throw off the sense of smell of salmon, inhibiting the large fish's ability to escape predators. Copper is also toxic to plankton, an essential food source for many fish.

[Source: [FOX News](#)]

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