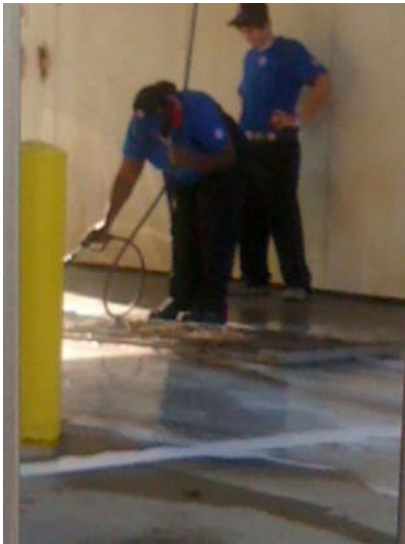




Pizza employees seen washing oven rack at Gastonia car wash (photos)

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Two Domino's employees were spotted washing parts of a pizza oven at a Gastonia car wash on Tuesday. The sight outraged a Channel 9 viewer.

"My wife and I were absolutely disgusted," said the viewer, who sent WSOC Channel 9 photos he snapped at the car wash on South New Hope Road. "There could be road kill or insects (or) antifreeze on that ground."

People at the same car wash on Thursday echoed his indignation when they saw the photos.

"It's not right," Pamela White said.

"I know where I won't be getting food for a little while," Greg Pate said. "That's unbelievable. There is something missing in their training, I would think."

Tim McIntyre, the vice president of communications for Domino's, agreed, saying the manager of the New Hope Road store made an error in judgment when he sent the employees to the car wash. The company typically hires a crew to clean the oven components at the store.

"This is not part of our company's standard procedure for cleaning oven equipment. The only thing we expect to be cleaned in a car wash is ... well, a car," McIntyre said in an e-mail to Channel 9.

Doc Thompson, the environmental health supervisor for Gaston County's Health Department, had a different reaction to the photos. He said the employees' actions posed no problem or hazard to consumers, because the oven rack that was placed on the ground doesn't actually touch pizzas. Instead, pizzas are placed on pans and then placed on the rack, he said, adding that the heat used to bake the food is hot enough to kill bacteria.

"So it doesn't pose a threat for food borne illness," Thompson said.

Channel 9 asked Domino's what, if anything, happened to the employees in the photos. The company's only response was, "You have our statement."

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