



# Success Study: Acceptance of Septage at Claremore's Treatment Plant

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## Introduction

For years, haulers in and around Claremore, Oklahoma, struggled with limited and costly options for septage disposal. The city's treatment plant, while technically capable, faced resistance from operators and staff who perceived trucked-in waste as nothing more than added work, added stress, and no additional pay.

But when Claremore's leaders began to approach the question with a business mindset rather than a payroll mindset, the conversation shifted. They asked: What if this facility could generate revenue instead of just handling costs? What if accepting pretreated septage could strengthen our infrastructure, reduce illegal dumping, and benefit both citizens and businesses alike?

This mindset shift led to a turning point: Claremore's acceptance of septage as a permitted waste stream — transforming a challenge into an opportunity.

## The Mindset Challenge

The biggest barrier was never the technical capacity of the plant. It was mindset.

- Operator perspective: Many saw septage as "more work" with "no more pay." The fear of clogging, odors, and the dreaded "blue juice" from portable sanitation waste reinforced resistance.
- Perception of risk: Stories of formaldehyde and chemical toxicity lingered, often without scientific backing. Ignorance of what was actually in portable restroom waste fueled unnecessary fear.
- Payroll mentality: Staff approached the issue as employees — focusing on daily workload and stress, not on long-term sustainability or financial gain.



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## A Business Approach

When city leadership reframed the issue like a business investment, the numbers told a new story.

- Profitability: Each gallon of pretreated septage received represented not just waste but revenue. At scale, this added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.
- Efficiency: Pretreatment processes significantly reduce risk. By removing solids and balancing pH, the liquid stream can be discharged in compliance with the Sewer Use Ordinance with minimal disruption.
- Community benefit: Revenue offsets help stabilize utility rates for citizens, fund

infrastructure improvements, and create a reliable local disposal option for haulers who would otherwise travel long distances — saving time, fuel, and money.

## Overcoming the “Blue Juice” Barrier

At another regional facility, one of the fiercest battles came over portable sanitation waste. The color, chemicals, and myths surrounding “blue juice” made it a lightning rod for fear. But careful research and education changed the narrative:

- Modern deodorizing solutions rarely contain formaldehyde; instead, they use biodegradable biocides and dyes.
- With proper screening, conditioning, and equalization, portable restroom waste behaves no differently than septage.
- By addressing ignorance with data, the fear barrier was broken down.

The lesson for Claremore was clear: knowledge reduces fear, and fear reduction opens the door to opportunity.

## The Result in Claremore

By aligning the plant’s capabilities with a profit-driven, citizen-focused mindset, Claremore achieved:

- Approval for septage acceptance at the city’s wastewater treatment plant.
- New revenue streams for the city, directly benefiting taxpayers and reducing dependence on outside disposal sites.
- Partnership with haulers, who gained a local, reliable, and cost-effective disposal option.
- Improved regional compliance, reducing the risk of improper dumping and protecting Oklahoma’s environment.



## Conclusion

Claremore's success story illustrates that the true barrier to innovation is not always equipment, permits, or technology. More often, it is mindset.

When operators and leaders shift from a payroll mentality to a business mentality, they begin to see opportunities rather than burdens. By asking not "How much more work is this for me?" but "What could this mean for our community?" Claremore unlocked new revenue, stronger infrastructure, and a better partnership with local businesses.

The moral: Treat your plant like a business, not just a job. The result is growth, sustainability, and a community that thrives.

