



Print this page

TULSA WORLD classifieds
and more

 Return to Story

Commercial trash haulers deregulated

by: BRIAN BARBER World Staff Writer
6/23/2007

Tulsa's City Council voted this week to deregulate commercial trash haulers effective July 1, allowing them to dispose of their loads where they choose.

Commercial haulers have argued that a free-enterprise system would help drive down the regionally high disposal costs for local businesses.

Tulsa's commercial disposal rate had been as much as \$2.58 per cubic yard because of the city's \$180 million debt on the Walter B. Hall Resource Recovery Facility. That's about double the rate in other cities.

For example, a popular convenience store chain had a Tulsa location with a monthly trash bill of \$534 and another in Owasso with a bill of \$270 for the exact same service.

With the burn plant's debt having been paid off May 1, commercial haulers were demanding the deregulation.

The council set a trash fee of 55 cents per cubic yard so that businesses still contribute to citywide special programs, including litter control, illegal dumping control, the Metropolitan Environmental Trust and the green waste site.

In the future, haulers will bill their customers for their disposal costs, while the city will bill only the special fee. The changes do not affect residential service or fees.

A gentlemen's agreement on deregulation was made years ago between city leaders and commercial haulers.

To avoid litigation, city officials vowed that they would act once the burn plant's bonds were paid.

Attorney Doug Boyd, who represents the commercial hauling company American Waste Control, warned the councilors before the vote, "If you don't keep that agreement, we're not going to keep ours."

The legal threats were a result of a 1994 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that prohibits state and local governments from enacting waste laws that interfere with "interstate commerce," as defined by the U.S. Constitution.

For the last 20 years, the city has directed all trash to the burn plant and an area landfill that is designated as the secondary disposal site.

Quarry Landfill was set to receive all 380,000 tons of trash the city generates annually effective July 1, but now it must compete for the 220,000 tons of commercial waste.

Former Mayor Bill LaFortune, an attorney who represents Waste Management, which operates Quarry Landfill, urged councilors to tweak the ordinance to be in compliance, rather than completely deregulate commercial trash.

LaFortune said councilors should add a line that says the waste has to be taken to the designated site -- the landfill -- unless it is being shipped out of state.

But Council Chairman Roscoe Turner said it is important to keep the city's word to the commercial haulers.

Brian Barber 581-8322
brian.barber@tulsaworld.com

Early pickup for some residents

Residents in the city's northwest quadrant will have their trash picked up one hour earlier during the summer.


Customers in the area, which is serviced by city trash haulers, must have their trash carts at the curb by 6 a.m. on their collection day.

The early collection will continue through August.

The area is expected to return to 7 a.m. service Sept. 4.

Service time for customers in the rest of the city won't change. They must always have their trash to the curb by 6 a.m.

Copyright © 2007, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved

 [Return to Story](#)