

Surplus Property Success Story

Small City Reaps Significant Savings Using Surplus Property Program *"It's truly been a blessing to us," says Heath Harrison of Chatsworth*

For Heath Harrison of the Chatsworth Water Works Commission (CWWC), it began with the challenge of having limited resources in his small Georgia city and recalling how the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Surplus Property Program had provided assistance to another state municipality. Harrison had spent several years of his career working for a company in Dalton that benefited from obtaining surplus property. In his current role as Assistant General Manager of Engineering and Operations for CWWC, he seized an opportunity to bring the Surplus Property Program to the city of Chatsworth.

"When I came here seven and a half years ago, we did not have a lot of the tools, equipment, things we really needed to do our job and take care of our systems. I knew we didn't have all of that and of course, we didn't have the capital to go out and buy all of it either," says Harrison.

With this in mind, he took action to bring his goal of obtaining surplus items for CWWC to fruition. "I started thinking about the Surplus Program, investigated it and then started doing a little bit of research into it. I took it on my own accord, and my general manager supported it. He said, 'if you want to put the effort in and you want to make it happen, feel free to do it.'" With the support of his supervisor and approval from city officials, Harrison completed the application process and became the CWWC's point of contact for Surplus Property.

The investment in time and effort in the Surplus Property Program has paid off with exponential savings for CWWC. Harrison estimates the medium-sized water and sewer utility company has received more than \$1 million dollars of equipment and supplies through the DOAS Surplus Property Program since the partnership began.

"It's truly been a blessing to us," he says. "In fact, we've been able to acquire it [the equipment and supplies] at very little cost." The largest item Chatsworth has received has been a generator that came from Korea, and the only acquisition expense was shipping. "We would have never been able to purchase that had it not been for the Surplus Program," adds Harrison. A new generator of that kind would have cost about \$500,000 dollars, he explains. With the generator, the city can now keep their entire sewer plant up and running for two weeks without power.

Harrison adds that he and especially the city's commission are grateful for what they have received thus far, as the CWWC is self-funded and do not receive any taxpayer dollars.

Last summer, the water commission also acquired a much-needed front-end loader to support their operations and self-sufficiency. "Being a smaller community, we do a lot of work ourselves. Construction costs are at an all-time high right now and getting contractors to do work is very expensive. Part of what we've been wanting is a front-end loader for quite a while to shuttle rock and to unload pipe." Harrison also expressed appreciation for the behind-the-scenes work of Surplus Property's federal team to facilitate the transaction.



Front-end Loader acquired through Surplus Property

"Everything we've ever gotten has been usable quality. We've not been disappointed. "It's a worthwhile program," states Harrison. "Everything has always been what we've expected and more from a quality standpoint."

To be successful with the program, Harrison shares this advice, "It takes a little bit of effort and a little bit of record keeping, filling out the utilization forms and that type of stuff. You've got to have somebody's who's committed to doing the paperwork, but overall, it benefits the company greatly. I see the benefit every day and it's worthwhile to me to go through the paperwork and additional job duties that I've created for myself," says Harrison.

Most importantly, CWWC has been able to increase its services and customer base. "The equipment that we've been able to get through surplus has enabled us to expand and provide more services for individuals who we normally wouldn't be able to assist. It frees up resources and capital internally to be able to do other things with it."

Surplus Property Director Steve Ekin shares Harrison's sentiments that the program's benefits far exceed any small amount of paperwork required. "In many cases, the value to the community is immeasurable and can be life-impacting in some instances. We encourage our participants to stick with it long term and reap the rewards. We are always here to offer help along the way."