

Flood Victim Files Suit Against City of Burlingame Over Neglect and Faulty Water Pump Systems

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Today, a business and property owner filed suit—one of the many to come—against the City of Burlingame for the dangerous conditions created by the City’s stormwater systems during the rain on October 24, 2021. The City had received prior warning of that rain, with several days to prepare for its impacts, yet failed to act.

On October 25, 2021, Michael Mitchell, who owns a small imaging business on Malcolm Road in Burlingame, arrived at work to find eighteen inches of water in his premises and much of his photographic equipment and supplies submerged. The Bayfront neighborhood where Mitchell owns and runs Mitchell Imaging is a mostly industrial and commercial area served by storm drains that funnel to a pumping station on Cowan Road.

That City knew that the stormwater system had been in disrepair for years, and the pumps were inadequate. The complaint alleges that in 2009, a \$39 million taxpayer-funded capital improvement program was approved that included upgrading the pumps to avoid flooding problems. Prior to the October 24th storm, a City Contractor had removed the old pumps but was behind schedule on installing the new ones. The temporary pumps they had left in-place were woefully inadequate and failed to prevent the flooding. The result, predictably, was extensive flooding throughout the area west of 101.

Many business and property owners in the industrial area were similarly impacted, with thousands of dollars of property damage and lost business. The clean-up is still underway in some of the offices and businesses.

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