

One day after Biden declares state of emergency from June floods

Major floods hit metro Detroit again

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On Friday, just three weeks after record rainfall wreaked havoc on the metro Detroit area, more storms overwhelmed the region's crumbling infrastructure. The National Weather Service issued a flood warning for Wayne County and neighboring Macomb County due to heavy rains.

One day after President Joe Biden declared a state of emergency for Washtenaw and Wayne counties from the June 23–25 floods, scenes similar to the events of late June emerged on social media. They showed abandoned vehicles sitting in water on the sides of major freeways, stranded drivers awaiting emergency assistance and flooded basements with waist-high water.

Three days before the new flooding, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) announced that over 24,000 households had submitted flood damage claims in the wake of the June devastation. Since nothing was done in the meantime to improve infrastructure and prevent such floods from happening again, many of the residents filing for much-needed disaster relief are the same ones who were hit again by Friday's flooding.

Interstates 75, 96 and 94 as well as popular commuter routes—the Lodge, Davison and Southfield freeways—were once again underwater by late Friday morning. The Lodge briefly reopened in the early afternoon, but quickly flooded again as the rain continued, stranding one driver atop his car as he waited for rescuers to save him. The Department of Natural Resources lent a boat to the rescue effort and the man was recovered unharmed.

One local news outlet reported that many Dearborn Heights residents were kayaking through their neighborhoods because it was safer than driving.

The floods three weeks ago were the result of a power

outage at DTE Energy that led to freeway pump failures. Apparently the pump locations did not have backup generators in case of a power outage. It is unclear precisely what infrastructural failure caused Friday's flooding, since no major power outages were reported this time around.

Dearborn City Council meeting erupts

On Tuesday, just a week and a half after residents gathered in Dearborn to protest the lack of response from city officials following the June flooding, a Dearborn City Council meeting erupted in anger.

The four-hour meeting was nearly ended twice by City Council President Susan Dabaja, who claimed she was being “crucified” as residents raised concerns about the floods.

Over 8,000 Dearborn homes were impacted in the June flooding. Many of these residents, as well as residents of Detroit and other surrounding suburbs such as Inkster and Grosse Pointe, had just begun the process of replacing destroyed appliances and rebuilding damaged homes, only to have them all ruined again.

Residents have raised concerns about how they will pay for the damage that has been done, now twice in the span of three weeks. Many have yet to recover from the 2014 and 2018 floods.

Many who attended the protests and City Council meeting voiced anger over the lack of trash collection. Moldy furniture and carpet soaked in raw sewage sat for days on curbs in the sun, creating serious public health concerns.

unprecedented event.

Grosse Pointe Park residents file lawsuit

Also on Tuesday, 11 households in Grosse Pointe Park filed a lawsuit against the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) and the cities of Detroit and Grosse Pointe Park. Each family has had to deal with hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damage.

The suit contends that the authorities were aware of the potential failure of two particular freeway pumps and that they disregarded weather reports warning that heavy rainfall would occur. They also allege that city and water officials are well aware of the failing infrastructure but have done nothing to improve it.

Paul Doherty, attorney at Ven Johnson Law and also a flood victim, released a statement on behalf of the families he is representing in the case. The statement said:

DWSD takes in nearly half of a billion dollars in water and sewer fees annually, yet aging water and sewer lines under their purview regularly fail, devastating anything and everything caught in the path of these floodwaters. Local residents are at the mercy of faceless local bureaucrats who literally put their constituents' safety at risk by not investing in proper infrastructure. This flooding has upended lives causing stress and a feeling of powerlessness, and a huge financial strain of rebuilding homes or businesses.

GLWA's General Counsel Randal Brown responded in a statement:

GLWA supports Governor Whitmer's request for federal aid to provide residents and businesses in the impacted areas with the resources to rebuild after the floods. Seeking federal aid is the appropriate way to address this

City officials and GLWA spokespeople have maintained in recent weeks that pumps and equipment all operate as they should. While heavy rainfall due to changing climate patterns has been on the rise in recent years, nothing has been done to update or maintain infrastructure to deal with these changes, and officials use climate change as an excuse for shoddy infrastructure.



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