

# Farmington homes flooded with raw sewage left with unresolved damages

Homeowners have been waiting for months for someone to be found at fault so they can get insurance payouts.

By PAIGHEN HARKINS

Tyler Erickson noticed water flowing into his basement from a shower drain and a utility closet around 3:30 p.m. on Nov. 10. The water didn't stop, he said, for nearly three hours.

When the deluge of diluted sewer water — bits of feces and toilet paper included, he said — finally ceased, his basement was left inundated and unusable. "Super, super gross," Erickson recalled, "and it smelled really bad."

The problem, according to a state environmental incident report, was easy enough to suss out: The nearby Cherry Hill Water Park discharged its entire lazy river — all 150,000 gallons of it — into the 8-inch sewer line.

The water overwhelmed the sewer system, so it streamed up through the drains of 11 Farmington houses less than a mile away and just south of the park. And seven months later, many of these homes remain in a state of disrepair.

Central Davis Sewer District contends it did nothing wrong, said district manager Jill Jones. But in compliance with its "No Fault, Good Neighbor Policy," it has paid out \$150,000, split evenly among the homeowners, Jones said.

That wasn't enough to mitigate the sewer water damage and make the spaces livable again, two homeowners told The Salt Lake Tribune, and their personal insurance policies don't cover damage from causes that originated outside their property.

So homeowners have been waiting for Cherry Hill's insurance provider to make a determination about whether the park is at fault, in hopes of another payout. The process has taken longer than expected and they feel stuck.

Cherry Hill declined The Tribune's interview request. But Erickson and another homeowner, Michael Kroon, said that in their talks with the water park, its representatives claim it has always drained the lazy river this way and they don't know why it was a problem last year.

Jones said the sewer district has asked its own insurance provider to look into the



**Above** » Tyler and Jen Erickson stand in their flood-damaged Farmington basement on May 20. Their basement was inundated with raw sewage last November. **Below** » The bottoms of the walls are bare studs after removal of damaged drywall in the Ericksons' basement

flooding, as well as a private engineering firm, and it seems clear the water park is at fault. The discharge violated "numerous federal, state, and District statutes, regulations, and rules," she said in an email.

"[T]he flow from Cherry Hill was exponentially greater than it has been in the past," she said. "Cherry Hill may assert that it did nothing different, but the evidence of the surcharge indicates differently."

It's likely the river was drained faster than usual, she said, noting that the change seems to coincide with new ownership at the park. Inspections show the district's sewer line remains intact with no defects, she added.

## 'STUCK IN THE MIDDLE'

Michael Kroon was out running errands



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