

STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION:

New Calamities Hit the BOE Headquarters Building

The State Board of Equalization's problem-plagued headquarters was hit by two new calamities this week. First, repairs to a "flex line" in the ninth-floor ceiling went awry, leading to massive flooding on several floors of the state-owned office at 450 N Street in Sacramento. Then, crews called in to fix the flood damage found signs of pre-existing mold in the walls.

In a March 22 memo to BOE employees, Deputy Director of Administration Liz Houser explained that the deluge occurred while the building's owner, the California Department of General Services, was attempting to fix another problem:

"Sunday, March 22, 2009, DGS was making repairs to the heater unit on the 9th floor of the 450 N Street headquarters building. A ball valve failed sending thousands of gallons of water from the 9th floor down to the first floor. The 8th and 9th floors took most of the water causing these floors to be temporarily closed on Monday, March 23."

Employees who normally report to work on the eighth and ninth floors were put on paid administrative time off, while those who work on other floors were instructed to report to work as usual. Approximately 275 employees were affected, but 75 to 80 were able to work at alternate work stations or through telecommuting, the BOE said.

On March 23, the BOE's executive director sent out another memo, notifying employees that DGS consultants "will dry and replace sheetrock on all floors that were affected by Sunday's water intrusion event."

The next day, employees received another memo about what was described as "the water event":

"DGS reports that during work last evening to repair the damage caused by the water event of last Sunday, March 22, suspect mold was discovered on the first floor near the historical room, and on floors 2, 3, 6 and 7 at the water damaged areas on the hallway side of the northwest stairwell, at the floor level. DGS has advised us that the areas have been taped over and contained until appropriate protocols and remediation steps can be taken to address the areas of concern. This may likely include the construction of containment areas as we have seen in other locations throughout the building."

Previous problems at the BOE headquarters include windows that spontaneously fell out and crashed to the sidewalk below, leaky windows and pipes that led to major mold problems, an infestation of bats, and elevators that can be timed with a sundial. The problems have been so numerous that the BOE's meeting agenda now includes a standing item for building updates, and the home page of the agency's website includes a link titled, "[BOE Headquarters Building Assessment](#)."

More than \$29 million has been spent on building repairs in recent years. Still, six of the building's 24 floors are closed due to repair efforts, according to a March 25 press release from the board. The BOE is actively working on a relocation plan.