

\$35 Million Settlement in Class Action Fire Case

A fire destroyed a business center and damaged neighboring buildings resulting in a class action suit with more than 100 claimants and 16 defendants. Business owners, home owners, employees, and patrons, all of whom had property destroyed, claimed that the negligence by the business center owners and others caused the fire which required more than 500 firefighters to extinguish. Robson Forensic was retained to evaluate remediation actions performed on a circuit breaker panel, as well as a product defect.

The cause of the fire was found to be an electrical arc in the circuit breaker panel whose cover had been removed. This panel had been damaged in a flood, but was not repaired. According to statements, the electrical service contractor who serviced the building after the flood did not advise that the circuit breakers needed to be replaced.

Our experts showed that the service company's remediation actions were not properly performed. They should have replaced the power distribution panels and the circuit breakers which had been submerged in the flood. Their failure to properly repair the damaged panel violated accepted standards of care and was a cause of the fire. We also showed that the electrical panel failed to properly warn users that units submerged in water should be replaced. The manufacturer's failure to indicate the known dangers of using water-exposed equipment or to require replacement of a unit damaged by water did not follow accepted industry standards and was also a cause of the fire.

This case settled for \$35 million.

To email the expert involved in this case: [Daryl L. Ebersole P.E.](#) with [Fires / Explosions](#)
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