Beloved West Valley comic shop forced to move after flooding

Move comes ahead of holiday shopping season

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WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah — A beloved comic shop operating within Valley Fair Mall is having to move outdoors after a water line break flooded their store in October. This as the holiday shopping season looms on the horizon.

On October 30, a pressurized water line running into the mall broke, releasing an estimated 1.3 million gallons of water into the back of The Nerd Store, which sells comics, cards, and other collectibles.

"It flooded through our walls and covered almost the entirety of our 9000 square foot store," says co-owner Charles Prows. "We have to throw everything away that the water touched, including all of the floors and the walls and any product that was on the floor in the back room and any of that stuff... it's been a nightmare."

While the exact amount of damages is still being calculated, Prows tells us some of the merchandise lost due to the flooding includes 45 long boxes. Each box usually holds about 300 single issues of comics.

Standard issues from major publishers such as Marvel or DC typically sell for about $3.99 on average, while premium issues, such as variant covers, limited series, one-shot issues, or even titles from independent publishers can sell for as high as $9.99 on average. Based on those numbers, a loss of one long box would equate to about $1,200 at minimum.

While The Nerd Store been working to fully assess the damage, as well as dealing with the usual delays and headaches that come from interacting with insurance companies, Prows says Valley Fair Mall itself has been eager to help.

"[The] mall has been phenomenal," says Prows. "Within the first day, they offered us the cleaning crew to come in and help us kind of mop up some of the water and help us get some stuff off the floors and make it so there wasn't further damage happening... within a couple days they had a new spot for us."

The new location is within the same mall complex, but is an outdoor space located at the main community plaza on the mall's west side. Between the move and the dropping temperatures, The Nerd Store could see diminished sales during the critical holiday shopping season, a time when stores within the mall rely heavily on foot traffic.

"There's a bunch of people who don't know we exist.... and just kind of wander in," says Prows. "[We're] hoping people will find us outside and still make their way to us."

Despite the setbacks, Prows remains hopeful, as many regular customers have been eager to show their support, with some offering to help mop the store the day the flooding happened, and others bringing boxes to help pack and move merchandise.

"It's the reason I love the [comics and gaming] industry," says Prows. "It is so much of building our own community and creating a safe place where people can just be themselves and kind of hang out without any judgment."

The Nerd Store will continue to provide updates via their Facebook and Instagram pages. While Valley Fair Mall is their flagship location, The Nerd Store also has sister stores at University Place in Orem, and at The Gateway in Salt Lake City.