

The LookOut news

Local Law Firm Takes on DWP

By Lookout Staff

August 25 -- The LA Department of Water and Power (DWP) may soon find itself in some hot water after a prominent Santa Monica firm representing plaintiffs in the farmers market tragedy filed a lawsuit against the utility giant Wednesday.

The law firm of Greene, Broillet, Panish & Wheeler, LLP announced during a press conference in Santa Monica that it is charging that DWP is trying to steal a Marina del Rey-based e-commerce system by forcing the company that created it out of business.

Office Future Systems'(OFS) founder, Dr. B.J. Hawkins, alleges -- among other claims -- that DWP defaulted on payments to her company in order to bankrupt it and allow the utility access to the source code of OFS' e-commerce system, which helps businesses manage their supply chain.

After using the product for two years, DWP and OFS reportedly entered negotiations to expand the e-commerce system's use.

OFS alleges that DWP indicated they would agree to expand their company's budget to make way for increased contracts, which led OFS to invest "significant resources into making critical preparations for new services."

OFS claims the deal fell through at a DWP board meeting in June, when the utility removed from its agenda an amendment that would have increased its OFS contract limit by nearly \$3 million.

In an added claim, OFS' attorneys allege that DWP wanted to "protect itself from exposure to 'pay to play' scams, fraud, discrimination and other illegal activity."

Attorney's for OFS say the company has been in business between 10 and 15 years and employs nearly 25 people.

DWP spokeswoman Gale Harris declined to comment on the allegations made in the suit.

"Since LADWP management has not yet seen the claim, our only response is that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has met its obligations under the contract," Harris said.



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