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[As Alfred Angelo closes all stores, here's what brides-to-be can do](#)

By [Alicia Robinson](#), The Press-Enterprise; [Hannah Madans](#), The Orange County Register; [Kevin Smith](#), San Gabriel Valley Tribune; and [Neil Nisperos](#), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

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Bride-to-be Darlene Mejia, 27, was waiting nervously Friday morning outside the closed Alfred Angelo store at Tyler Street and Magnolia Avenue in Riverside.

Her \$1,800 dress, a strapless white gown with a full skirt and beaded bodice, was paid for and at the shop to be pressed for her July 22 wedding.

Mejia was in disbelief when she got a 6 a.m. text from her mother.

“The store’s closed,” she told Mejia. “You better go see if you can get your dress.”

She tried the phone numbers listed on a memo taped to the shop door but only got recordings. She wondered why someone from the store didn’t call her Thursday when they were still open. Fortunately for her, Mejia later recovered the dress — though her veils remain missing.

Alfred Angelo, one of the world’s largest manufacturers and retailers of wedding gowns, closed all 60 of its U.S. stores as it filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The retailer, known for its Disney-themed designs, also has partnerships with some 1,400 retailers.

“I’m really trying to stay calm, but all the money we put into these dresses,” Mejia said.

By Friday afternoon, Mejia had learned the person in charge of alterations and pressing garments for the store has a Rancho Cucamonga shop where the work is done. Her cousin made calls and found it.

The dress was safe, the shopkeeper told her. As for the veils, she may buy another set but has a few days to figure that out.

Brides or bridal parties who have been affected by the sudden closures have been advised to contact attorney Patricia A. Redmond with the Miami, Fla.-based law firm Stearns Weaver

Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson. Redmond could not be reached Friday and her assistant couldn't provide any information either.

"We have no comment at this time," she said.

Tory Dean, a manager with The Dresser Bridal Couture shop in Fullerton, said she figured something was up before the stores abruptly closed.

"We kind of got wind about it last weekend," she said. "We had a couple walk in the door who had gone to an Alfred Angelo store in Brea by the Brea Mall, and they said that store was no longer able to order dresses — everything in the store was discounted. So they came and shopped with us."

For Redlands bride-to-be Brenda Taylor, 37, the frustration and disappointment have led her to consider canceling her July wedding next summer.

After looking for a dress for a year, she finally found one at Alfred Angelo's Riverside store that she liked and that came in her size — the Jasmine gown from the Disney collection. Taylor had paid for most of it and was going to complete the purchase when the dress was ready this fall, she said.

After learning the company had shut down, she tried calling different stores and rushed to one in Ontario because the phone number still worked, only to see a rack of dresses inside the locked doors, she said.

Taylor said she thinks it's unlikely she'll get her deposit back.

"I worked so much overtime just to pay for that. That's like \$1,000 gone, Taylor said. "I'm almost to the point where I'm saying 'forget the wedding.'"

For rapidly approaching weddings, brides and customers of Angelo's may be out of luck.

Coral Lopez-Castro, a partner at Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, has handled retail bankruptcies in the past.

All decisions about dresses, she said, are up to a trustee, not the company, in a Chapter 7 filing, which indicates an asset liquidation rather than a Chapter 11 restructuring.

"It would seem to me that the better course of business would be to release the dress to the customer," Lopez-Castro said. Not doing so, she said, would be a "public relations nightmare and frankly chaos."

Ron Friedman, a CPA and retail expert at Marcum's Century City office and co-leader in the firm's National Retail & Consumer Products Industry group, thinks the brides will get their dresses.

“I would be surprised if a judge didn’t give them their inventory,” he said. “It would be unusual to punish the consumer or the public. The owners of the company and the suppliers and the landlords will take the major hits.”

For any rapidly approaching weddings, Lopez-Castro suggests going to Plan B.

“The trustee is going to need some time to figure things out,” she said.

“I hope nobody has a wedding this weekend,” Friedman added. He said the judge and trustee would work together to make these decisions.

If a creditor has a lien on the inventory, they may choose to resell the dress, Lopez-Castro said. The Alfred Angelo customer could file a claim, but it “will not be worth very much.”

Anaheim resident Victor Esquivel’s fiancée Airam Arroyo put a deposit on an Alfred Angelo dress at Brea Mall.

She texted him Friday, scared, after hearing the store had closed, Esquivel said.

The two were not going to the store to see what is going on. “There’s no point in going if the store is closed,” Esquivel said.

The two are fearful that if they don’t get the dress back they won’t have enough money for another one.

“We have so many bills right now. We can’t afford another dress. It’s very stressful,” Esquivel said.

Lopez-Castro said he may be in luck as it was likely the trustee would allow customers to pay the balance instead of selling the dress in a liquidation sale. But the decision would be up to the trustee.

Friedman had a different take. The CPA said these customers would likely be treated as creditors, likely in a preferred class, because “they have deposits on a dress they are never going to get.”

Kristin Laterreur, a 32-year-old Fullerton resident, bought her gown at an Alfred Angelo location in Beverly Hills for her Nov. 3 wedding.

She heard the store had closed on social media and quickly went to the store to see if she could pick up her dress, which was in the store for alterations.

She became frustrated at the store when nobody was there or had any information for her. Other anxious customers were at the store as well.

“A couple hours ago I was crying a lot,” Laterreur said. “I’m at the point where there’s not much else I can do. I just want to know if I need to start over.”

A group of about a dozen concerned customers also gathered in front of the Alfred Angelo Bridal shop in Rancho Cucamonga on Friday morning.

A sign on the door of the store at 11540 4th St. provided the email address predmond@stearnsweaver.com for concerned customers to get more information.

Angry customers said they were frustrated they were not warned of the closure, and many were expecting a store representative to meet with them when store opened at 11 a.m.

Edith Enriquez of San Bernardino was among the crowd. Enriquez said about \$1,400 had been spent on her daughter’s wedding dress, which was to be ready next month.

“They called her and they had her pick up her veil and they said, ‘don’t worry, we’ll ship your dress,’ but they never told her about the situation ... it came out on the news,” Enriquez said. “We have that money invested in this dress, so in order to start looking somewhere else, we need that money to start again.”

Alma Alvarez of Ontario was also at the store Friday to see if she could pick up her daughter’s bridal gown, worth \$2,500.

“It’s really sad because the girls have their dream of getting their dresses, and it’s so hard for them to earn money to pay for the dresses, so it’s hard for me to see the news of their closing,” said an emotional Alvarez. “My daughter called me to go and pick up the dress if I could.”

Affected customers looking to get a dress elsewhere may be in luck as some competitors are offering deals.

David’s Bridal will offer people with an Alfred Angelo receipt 30 percent off wedding dresses, 20 percent off bridesmaid dresses, rush fees waived and alteration services for Alfred Angelo dresses.

Pebbles Bridal, which has locations in Woodland Hills and Orange County, is also offering aid to Alfred Angelo brides.

“We know the abrupt shutdown of all Alfred Angelo stores has left many of you without a gown for your big day and we truly feel for you. Stay calm. We got this,” the group wrote in an Instagram post. The company said customers with an unfulfilled Alfred Angelo gown or bridesmaid order can contact Pebbles Bridal locations for information on new orders and off-the-rack options.

Other retailers jumped in, too:

“If you have your measurements we may be able to help, we just launched our online store and have many designers who will go above and beyond to help those who have been left high and dry,” wrote Garth Hewitt from Timeless Bridal on Alfred Angelo’s Facebook page.

After hearing about the situation, bridal gown alterations specialist Renee Young, who went to the shop in Rancho Cucamonga, said she’s reaching out to help anyone in a bind because of the closure.

“I’m offering to help out any bride that needs help (with a dress),” said Young, who said she could be reached at her home business at 909-994-8463. “They’re frantic getting their gowns. Because it’s going to be a long process, I’m offering anything they might need to help with their wedding. I also have gowns for them to purchase under 100 dollars.”