

## Elevation Saves Business and Provides Refuge

**ESTES PARK, CO** – Thirteen years ago, Ravit Michener purchased an elevated building in Estes Park to house her new spa and retreat business.

Due to the elevation, her business was not only saved from the recent September flooding, but the structure provided refuge for the family as well.

The destructive Colorado storms and flooding affected approximately 2,000 square miles of the state. Nine individuals died and there was nearly \$2 billion in property damage.

The Rocky Mountain resort town of Estes Park was hit hard by the flooding. Starting September 9, the town received more rain in five days than it usually does annually. The town has a population of nearly 6,000 and is located about 75 miles northwest of Denver.

“We have lived in the city for 20 years and have never seen the rivers breach the banks until the September flood,” said Michener.

Besides owning the spa and retreat business, Michener, her husband Monty, and daughter Mia have a home near Fish Creek, not far from the business. On the day of the storm, they realized there was a strong possibility that their home might flood. The family members packed up their belongings and moved into the upstairs vacation rental above the business. Michener felt safer there because she knew the building was elevated. This proved to be a good decision since their home received a foot of water from the flooding.

The Micheners lived in the building for three weeks while wet carpet was being ripped out in their home and mud-soaked dry wall was being removed.

“During the flood, it was like a huge river surrounding our building,” said Michener. “We were totally an island. The entire cul-de-sac was an ocean and surrounding buildings were flooding except for the business next door, which also was elevated.”

“Not only were the banks of the Big Thompson River overflowing behind the business, but water was coming through the streets from another direction,” she said.

“It always bugged me that there was this big swell between me and my neighbor at the end of the property, but now I get it,” said Michener. “It was like a four-foot river between me and my neighbor.”

Her 2,600 square foot, two-story business structure is located approximately 30 feet from the Big Thompson River. The building has a flood protection level of two foot of freeboard above the base flood elevation. Michener’s elevation certificate also helped reduce her flood insurance rate.

There is not a freeboard requirement for Estes Park. But, as an extra precautionary measure, Will Birchfield, city building official, always advises individuals to raise structures above the base flood elevation. “Of, course it’s up to the individuals to decide,” said Birchfield.

Michener was grateful to get back in business without the clean-up other businesses were experiencing. The family was also grateful that they were able to use the upstairs retreat and not



worry about finding a place to live while their home was being repaired.

“The loss would have been huge in so many ways if this building had flooded, even though we had flood insurance,” said Michener. “I don’t want to even think about the problems we would have encountered; not only financially, but emotionally as well.”

For information on elevation and permits, homeowners should first contact their local building officials.