

The 2013 Flood

In September 2013, Boulder County, CO experienced a catastrophic flood event. The rain was heavy and continuous for three days and three nights. The National Weather Service called the 17” rain event a 1,000-year flood. The Federal Government designated it as a National Disaster. The damage was extensive, especially in Jamestown and Lyons, but also Longmont, City of Boulder, Estes Park, other mountain towns, and spots all over the county.

Jamestown, CO

The damage in Jamestown was substantial. Fifty percent of its infrastructure was destroyed: roads, bridges, town parks, and water distribution pipes. Out of the existing 125 homes, 18 were destroyed, and 44 were damaged, some severely. The fire station was destroyed; the water plant was severely damaged and out of commission for many months. The Post Office was damaged and closed for 140 days. The elementary school was closed, with students dispersed to two other locations.

Since the canyon road was damaged, even destroyed, in both directions, evacuation was implemented by helicopter. Over 90% of the 290 residents were displaced for up to a year. Worst of all, the flood’s first fatality was “town patriarch” and dear friend to all, Joey Howlett, who died when a debris/rock slide crushed the bedroom he was sleeping in.

Jamestown, CO came very close to be totally destroyed . . .

(Unless otherwise noted, all photos are by Sal Devincenzo.)

Houses Destroyed or Severely Damaged



Town Roads Destroyed

What used to be Lower Main St., Ward St., and Mill St. were covered in several feet of dirt, rocks, and debris and/or were washed away completely. James Canyon and Lefthand Canyon Roads were severely damaged, if not completely destroyed in parts.



(Photo by Steve Edelstein)



James Canyon and Lefthand Canyon Roads
(Photos from Boulder County Department of Transportation)



Other Damage

The floodwater and debris flow swept away everything in its path: houses, house foundations, roads, bridges, cars, huge trees, propane tanks, and utility poles. Everything. Including the flood sensors.



But thanks to help from county, state, and federal governments, volunteers from around the county, state, and country, as well as our own residents pitching in to shovel out several feet of mud and rocks from their neighbor's ground floor, Jamestown is back, rebuilt, and thriving!



I've been to many disasters but I can say I've never been to a stronger community. As I said before, the determination, strength, and gratitude was inspirational. You Jimtowners are the model of how a community should come together after such an event. If I could bottle the spirit of Jamestown I would call it 'Mountain Strong'. ~Scott W, FEMA Inspector