

\$750,000 Project

Tower To Provide Boulder Constant Light Show

By MARIO DIANDA
For The Camera

The highest man-made structure in Colorado soon will rise on the plains east of Boulder, and its flashing lights will be visible from the city all night.

The 985-foot tower will be as high as some of New York City's skyscrapers and eight feet higher than Colorado's highest structure — a television tower near Pueblo.

Construction of the tower, a project of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), will begin sometime next fall, after approval Wednesday by the Weld County Commissioners.

The tower will be built about 10 miles east of Boulder and three miles south of Colo. 82.

Diane Johnson, an in-

formation officer at NCAR, said the tower will provide NOAA and NCAR with the means of getting precise measurements of the wind at altitudes up to 985 feet.

She said the tower will be a more efficient tool for studying weather than the balloons now used because measurements of the wind will be constant.

The weather information also will be used by the two labs for comparing measurements to tell whether experimental radar instruments are working properly.

Because the radar instruments are so sensitive they reportedly can detect an insect a kilometer away, they must be checked against other measuring devices.

Some of the instruments on the tower will be used to measure winds moving in opposite directions. Others will be used to measure the speed and

direction of air in thunderstorms. Laser instruments also will be used to measure dust concentrations in the atmosphere.

The tower will be a tall, slender shaft resembling a television tower. It will be built of structural steel in a triangular configuration.

Strobe lights will be placed on each side at 150-foot intervals, starting at the 300-foot level. They will have reflectors behind them, and the flashes will be visible from Boulder.

The flashing lights, designed to warn away aircraft, will be bright enough to be seen in Boulder during the day.

The site near Erie was picked because it is on level ground, is within commuting distance of Boulder and is a location that is not uncertain by coal mines.

Some residents in the Erie area expressed concern about

the site close to the proposed Park and Estates subdivision and air park. With a private air strip already located to the south, the tower will be within one mile of the two airports.

But the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and a Weld County zoning inspector studied the situation and determined that the tower is not expected to cause any hazard to airplanes using the air strips.

Karl Posy, a public affairs officer at NOAA, said construction of the tower would begin sometime next fall. NOAA would pay the initial cost of the estimated \$750,000 project, he said, and NCAR would pay later.

In addition to the tower, the site will contain a research building to make measurements of the lower atmosphere. It also would serve as a facility for visiting scientists.