

**BUSINESS**

# connections

## Mountain Meets Sky

(as in Grandfather Mountain and SkyLine/SkyBest)

*(L to R): SkyLine/SkyBest Strategic Sales Supervisor Brent Keith, Grandfather Mountain Vice President Lesley Platek, SkyLine/SkyBest Chief Marketing & Sales Officer Edward Hinson and Grandfather Mountain President and Executive Director Jesse Pope*



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# BUSINESS connections

## Do you get the feeling that Mother Nature isn't happy with us?

Let's face it. We've had to face an unprecedented series of natural disasters and a world-wide public health crisis in 2020. But I've been so impressed with the perseverance and creativity of our local business community to meet these challenges head on.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a change of work location for many employees, and we explore **What Employees Need to Effectively Work from Home** on page 3. The list includes internet and phone services that meet the increased demands of business applications, which SkyLine/SkyBest can provide.

On pages 4 and 5, you'll find a **Business Spotlight on Grandfather Mountain**. This breathtaking natural wonder, like other businesses in the tourism industry, was especially hard hit by the pandemic. But things are starting to look up for Grandfather Mountain, thanks to a resilient staff, supportive community and new services from SkyLine/SkyBest. Another positive development is construction of its most ambitious project since the world-famous Mile High Swinging Bridge—the Conservation Campus.

I think we can all agree that **Disasters Happen, So You Need a Business Continuity Plan**. (After all, there was an earthquake this year in Alleghany County.) Check out pages 6 and 7 for a review of the key elements of a business continuity plan and tips on how to start the development process.

North Carolina has an abundance of both natural beauty and advanced communications technology. SkyLine/SkyBest is proud to contribute to the latter, and we're ready to help your business move successfully into 2021.

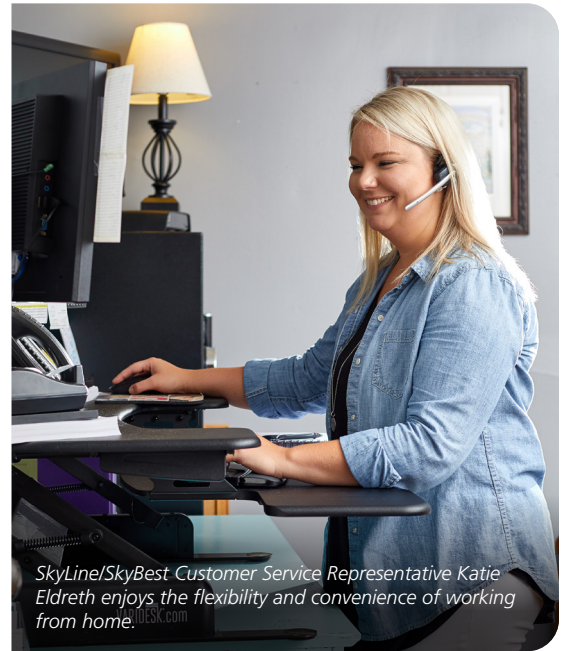


Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd  
Chief Executive Officer

# What Employees Need to Effectively Work from Home

Make sure your business is setting them up for success



*SkyLine/SkyBest Customer Service Representative Katie Eldreth enjoys the flexibility and convenience of working from home.* [utah.com](http://utah.com)

In light of the social distancing required to reduce the spread of COVID-19, some of your employees may now be working from home. They may also be struggling to maintain focus and productivity (not to mention balance work and parenting responsibilities).

Consider these strategies to help them be more productive while working remotely:

- **Encourage a designated workspace.** Your employees will likely work better from a desk or table in a separate area rather than from the living room sofa. Not only does a designated workspace provide a quieter environment, it also helps communicate to family members that the work day is in progress.
- **Pay attention to ergonomics.** The work space and equipment needs to fit the person using them to help reduce muscle and eye strain. A desk chair should offer lumbar support and allow the person to put their feet on the floor with legs at a 90-degree angle. In addition, the computer monitor should be about an arm's length away and positioned so the user is looking straight ahead or slightly down at the screen, not straining upwards. If your employee uses a laptop, a separate keyboard and a laptop stand may be needed to create an ergonomic setup.
- **Remind them of the importance of proper lighting.** In addition to a ceiling light, the workspace needs to have adequate task lighting. To avoid screen glare, the computer and monitor should not be placed in front of a window.
- **Suggest sticking to a workday routine as much as possible.** Your employees will likely have a better work-from-home

experience if they work roughly the same hours they did when in the office and continue to get dressed in "real clothes." After all, it's more difficult to have a business mindset while working in pajamas!

- **Offer options for communication and collaboration.** Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from using a "richer" technology, such as video conferencing via Zoom, that gives participants many of the visual cues of a face-to-face meeting. Such technology also helps to maintain morale during this challenging period of isolation.
- **Provide the internet and phone services your employees need.** The services your employees now have at home may work fine for family use but be inadequate for the increased demands of business applications. SkyBest offers a range of super-fast and reliable internet speeds along with calling features such as Conference Calling, Auto Attendant, CallTree and Remote Call Forwarding.

To discuss upgrading your employees' internet and phone services to improve work-from-home effectiveness, call 1-844-SKYBEST or contact [BusinessSolutions@skyline.org](mailto:BusinessSolutions@skyline.org).



*(L to R): Grandfather Mountain Vice President Lesley Platek, SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive Charity Shatley, SkyLine/SkyBest Field Services Technician Sam Gates, SkyLine/SkyBest Chief Marketing & Sales Officer Edward Hinson, SkyLine/SkyBest Staking Engineer Tommy Sturgill, Grandfather Mountain Operations Manager Tommy Oakley, Grandfather Mountain President and Executive Director Jesse Pope, SkyLine/SkyBest Strategic Sales Supervisor Brent Keith and SkyLine/SkyBest Inside Sales Coordinator Hollie Brown. Not pictured: Grandfather Mountain Administrative Manager Kim Rupard, Grandfather Mountain Director of Marketing & Communications Frank Ruggiero, and SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Technical Consultant Tony Holt.*



# Grandfather Mountain

*A resilient staff and supportive community are helping this scenic attraction through the pandemic*

Grandfather Mountain is a place of amazing biodiversity and scenic beauty that towers 5,946 feet above northwest North Carolina. It's estimated to be 300 million years old—with certain rock formations dating back 1.2 billion years.

One third of the mountain is operated as a scenic travel attraction by the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Inc., with proceeds from tickets and souvenirs going toward preservation programs. Visitors can enjoy the famous Mile High Swinging Bridge, environmental habitats for native wildlife, a natural history museum, regular programs with staff naturalists, picnicking and the South's best alpine hiking trails. They can also get an up-close perspective of black bears, river otters, cougars, bald eagles and elk in their natural surroundings.

The rest of Grandfather Mountain is owned by the state of North Carolina. Accessible only on foot, visitors to Grandfather Mountain State Park can hike several miles of rugged alpine trails that lead across or around rock walls and pinnacles (often with the aid

of cables and ladders) through high-elevation terrain unlike any other in the Southeast.

## Facing the Pandemic's Challenges

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Grandfather Mountain? Frank Ruggiero, Director of Marketing & Communications for the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, replied, "Grandfather Mountain has been majorly impacted by the pandemic, like all other area businesses—especially those in the tourism industry. In addition to a complete closure of the park from mid-March through mid-May, we're still operating on a limited capacity reservation program. We have a resilient staff and community and were able to respond accordingly by reducing our operating expenses to be in line with revenue projections.



We were also very fortunate to have several generous foundations and private individuals who came forward to assist in our time of need. While the coming months are still uncertain, we've been able to slowly and gradually increase admission to the park as North Carolina has expanded its phased re-opening. The fall season is off to a really good start for us."

### Connecting with SkyLine/SkyBest

There was a bright spot during the challenging summer of 2020. Grandfather Mountain became a SkyLine/SkyBest business customer and enhanced its communications services. Grandfather Mountain now has a super-fast 250 Mbps Ethernet connection in all its buildings as well as a Mitel phone system and PRI to simultaneously handle up to 23 calls.

"Grandfather Mountain historically had an archaic phone system that was not integrated across the entire park. SkyLine/SkyBest has allowed us to network our phone system in a way that increases internal efficiency and decreases the need for our guests to have to call separate numbers to reach different areas. Our new Conservation Campus is now under construction, including additional infrastructure. When complete, all of Grandfather Mountain's phone and internet system will be integrated, creating an even more efficient communication system for our park," Grandfather Mountain President & Executive Director Jesse Pope said.



Grandfather Mountain Education & Interpretive Program Coordinator Lauren Farrell (left) and SkyLine/SkyBest Business Sales Executive Charity Shatley

He added, "The thing I value the most in our partnership with SkyLine/SkyBest is its member-focused culture. Our business cultures are completely aligned in that regard. SkyLine/SkyBest is large enough to handle even our most sophisticated communication needs. However, it's also small enough that we know the names of everyone on our team, making it easier when we need to turn to them for assistance. We've received wonderful personal attention, and in talking with other SkyLine/SkyBest business customers, they say the same. Grandfather Mountain strives to provide our guests the highest level of customer service every

day, and we, in turn, expect the same quality from our vendors and suppliers. SkyLine/SkyBest has exceeded our expectations in customer service and responsiveness."

### A Word to Other Businesses

What would Pope say to a business colleague in the area who was considering switching to SkyLine/SkyBest? He answered, "Switching to SkyLine/SkyBest was a great business decision for us. When considering cost, functionality, reliability and customer service, no other company can compare to the value and service SkyLine/SkyBest has to offer. They truly are second to none. Beyond that, they are a great community ambassador for our area. They do a lot of community service and engagement, and that very much aligns with our mission, vision and values, as well. While we're a new customer, I couldn't image a better provider for our communication needs."

## Introducing the Conservation Campus

In 2019, Grandfather Mountain broke ground on its most ambitious project since the world-famous Mile High Swinging Bridge—the Conservation Campus.

Here, guests will experience the Wilson Center for Nature Discovery, featuring all new state-of-the-art museum exhibits (designed by PGAV Destinations of St. Louis, Missouri), as well as outdoor learning spaces, an amphitheater and a botanical garden.

Designed by Boone-based Coffey Architecture, the Wilson Center—named for benefactors Bob and Susan Wilson—will nearly double the size of the park's current Nature Museum and feature 10,000 square feet of new education space, three classrooms for smaller groups and increased capacity for larger groups and restoration of the ADA-accessible auditorium.

Guests will also enjoy new outdoor learning spaces, including an amphitheater with terraced seating and a pavilion. New office space will help park educators and animal habitats staff prepare and support new, enhanced educational programs. Larger and more modern food-service facilities will allow for catering and serving educational groups, as well as expanded capacity for hosting conferences, seminars, receptions and community events.

To learn more, visit [www.grandfather.com/fulfillingpromises](http://www.grandfather.com/fulfillingpromises).





## Based on This Year, It's Perfectly Clear: Disasters Happen, So You Need a **Business Continuity Plan**

Since 2020 began, the U.S. has faced an unprecedented group of disasters. Topping the list, of course, is the pandemic, which has taken many lives and continues to disrupt nearly every aspect of daily life including how we work, shop, learn and socialize. Our country has also experienced earthquakes, floods, heat waves, wildfires and tropical storms.

Here in North Carolina, residents had to deal with a 5.1 magnitude earthquake (see sidebar on page 5) as well as heavy rains and flash flooding. If your business needed a wake-up call about the necessity of having a business continuity plan, you certainly got one. You may have asked yourself, "What if our business had been in the affected area? Would it have been able to keep functioning?"

### Common and Crippling Events

While large disasters understandably get most of the attention, smaller and more common events such as these can also be crippling to your business:

- Water main break
- Accident/crime scene that blocks entrances
- Asbestos/hazardous waste issue
- Water leak in server room
- Server failure
- Lightning strike
- Internal sabotage or embezzlement
- Cut fiber line
- Power outage
- IT service outage from a key supplier

Given the potential impact of events like these, you may think most businesses have a business continuity plan. Unfortunately, that's not the case. The U.S. Small Business Administration notes on its website, "Small business owners invest a tremendous amount of time, money and resources to make their ventures successful, yet many owners fail to properly plan and prepare for disaster situations."

### What Does Business Continuity Really Mean?

The Business Continuity Institute, which offers worldwide education and training, defines business continuity as "the capability of the organization to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following a disruptive incident."

You can also think of it this way: Business continuity is a proactive plan to avoid and mitigate risks associated with a disruption of operations. Disaster recovery is a reactive plan for responding after an event.



**Business continuity includes three key elements:**

- 1. Resilience** – Critical business functions and the supporting infrastructure are designed and engineered in such a way that they are materially unaffected by most disruptions through the use of redundancy and spare capacity, for example.
- 2. Recovery** – Arrangements are made to recover or restore business functions that fail for some reason.
- 3. Contingency** – The organization establishes a generalized capability and readiness to cope effectively with whatever major incidents and disasters occur. Contingency preparations constitute a last-resort response if resilience and recovery arrangements should prove inadequate in practice.

Business continuity planning is the process of identifying an organization's exposure and risk factors—both internally and externally—and developing an effective approach to mitigating that risk and exposure to maintain business as usual, or at acceptable levels determined by the organization.

**How to Start Planning**

If you don't have a business continuity plan, start by identifying the top two or three risks to your business—the things that would make it difficult or impossible for you to continue working—and discuss strategies to overcome them.

These risks will vary depending on the size and type of business. For example, a manufacturer might consider their supply chain to be their largest risk, so their business continuity plan would include factors for mitigating that risk with alternate suppliers, multiple shipping partners and methods, etc. On the other hand, an accounting business might be most concerned with its IT infrastructure and databases, carrier network reliability and alternate locations for its people to work in the event of a catastrophic occurrence. In this case, relocating critical processing to a data center and allowing people to access those systems from anywhere might be part of the company's business continuity plan. In general, most business continuity plans will need to address capturing and maintaining customer databases, inventory, accounting and historical information as well as communications issues.



**SkyLine/SkyBest can offer communications solutions to enhance business continuity and disaster recovery. To discuss the specific needs of your business, call 1-844-SKYBEST or contact [BusinessSolutions@skyline.org](mailto:BusinessSolutions@skyline.org).**

**How the August Earthquake Impacted Allegheny County**

Daniel Roten, Emergency Management Coordinator at the Allegheny County Office of Emergency Management, said, "This year's earthquake event on August 9 led to one of the most trying times for Allegheny County and its citizens. The impact was unprecedented, with more than 500 structures damaged to the tune of roughly 15 million dollars."

He continued, "This was also a challenge for the responders that serve our community. An earthquake is something we don't really train for or think will happen in Allegheny County. Responders from the Rescue Squad were out immediately checking on our citizens, all while their own homes had experienced the same disaster and were no doubt damaged as well."

Allegheny County staff logged 600-plus hours in the first week and a half after the earthquake, and the engineers from the State USAR teams worked over 300 hours.

"We're entering the recovery phase of this disaster and just getting the ball rolling to put homes back together. Our state government has approved funding, so hopefully, we can use that to build back stronger than ever," said Roten.





# Happy Thanksgiving

**WE'RE THANKFUL TO HAVE CUSTOMERS LIKE YOU!**

We're **thankful** for your years of loyalty to SkyLine/SkyBest.

We're **thankful** for the opportunity to serve you.

We're **thankful** for the ability to enhance your communications.

We're **thankful** for the joy of living and working in this community.

We're **thankful** for your continued trust as we move forward.



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