

BUSINESS

# connections

## Teaming Up With American Emergency Vehicles

*Pictured L-R: Todd Young, SkyLine Central Office Technician; Robin Miller, SkyLine Inside Sales Coordinator; George Rembert, AEV IT Manager; Jeff Dreyer, AEV Director of Manufacturing; Kent Barker, AEV Remount Operations Supervisor; Brent Keith, SkyLine Strategic Sales Supervisor*





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## BUSINESS connections

**Change is good.** But how do you know when the time is right to expand, upgrade your technology or implement new employee programs? This issue of *Business Connections* explores these situations to give you some ideas.

Your business changes for the better when you have the best employees, but to keep them you might want to offer **Perks to Perk Up Morale**. You'll find several suggestions on page 3, including amenities to make workers' lives easier and rewards for doing great work.

On pages 4 and 5, read about our spotlight customer, **American Emergency Vehicles**. This company has always been successful, but still took the risk to change by adding a new facility and growing its workforce over the years. SkyBest has helped by providing Metro Ethernet, which allows them to communicate more efficiently between locations.

Next, on page 6, check out some **Common Misconceptions About Internet Speeds**. Think your slow internet isn't affecting your employees and customers? Think again. If it's been a few years since your current speed was installed, it may be time for a change.

Perhaps the biggest change of all is starting a new company. On page 7 we **Welcome New Businesses** in the Boone and Lenoir areas. We encourage you to support this exciting and varied collection of retailers and service providers.

When your growth involves changes in technology, we're here to help. Give us a call or drop by to discuss what your next big step might be.



Sincerely,

Jimmy C. Blevins  
Chief Executive Officer



## Perks to Perk Up Morale

Employee turnover is costly, so figuring out how to keep talented workers is a major concern. To help build employee loyalty, your business may want to offer some carefully chosen perks.

For example, SkyLine/SkyBest has two employee-led committees that recommend and implement unique morale boosters, such as placing popsicles in office breakrooms on the hottest summer days. Our Health and Wellness Committee creates exercise/fitness challenges that encourage employees to practice healthy lifestyles. For those who prefer to watch sports, SkyLine/SkyBest employees complete tournament brackets for a chance to win small prizes. While these perks are modest, involving our employees through committee efforts that encourage fun and fitness has noticeably improved morale.

If you'd like some inspiration from what other businesses have done, check out these perk ideas:

**On-site Amenities.** Google has been known as a “best place to work” for years, largely due to its employee amenities. They include onsite massages, free fitness classes, gym memberships and WiFi-enabled shuttles to work. While Google’s perks are exceptional, they do illustrate a “make long work days easier” philosophy that can be implemented on a smaller scale.

**Spontaneous Rewards.** When you notice a specific outstanding achievement, reward the employee right away with a small bonus. It doesn’t have to be cash; some businesses give away event tickets, movie passes, restaurant certificates or an extra paid vacation day.

**Company Traditions.** DataTel, Inc. is a software developer in Virginia. Every year on Founder’s Day, employees get time off to participate in a community service project together. Other company traditions to consider are treats at the end of your busy season (such as with in-office shoulder massages) or marking anniversaries of each employee’s first day with lunch or a small gift.

**Flexible Work Hours.** Employees are grateful for flexibility that allows them to do their job and still take care of family obligations. Is your business able to “bend” on work hours, even on an occasional basis? It’s an inexpensive perk that can be invaluable for employee retention.

As you review your employee benefits and perks, remember to ask your workers what they’d appreciate or what they need in order to work more effectively.

### SkyLine/SkyBest Supports Cancer Research

Relay for Life takes place in area counties to support the American Cancer Society. SkyLine and its employees have been longtime supporters, raising thousands of dollars each year to fund continued research that we hope will one day lead to a cure. We’re proud to be part of an event that is held in more than 5,000 communities across the U.S. and beyond, bringing communities together to remember those we’ve lost to cancer, and celebrate and honor survivors. Relay events begin in the spring and continue through the summer months. We hope you will support the Relay event in your community. Together, we’re making a real difference in the fight against cancer.



# American Emergency Vehicles

*Providing quality  
ambulances to lifesavers  
around the world*



*Todd Young, SkyLine Central Office Technician, was a key person in finalizing the installation of the Metro Ethernet connection at both facilities.*

American Emergency Vehicles (AEV) was founded in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina in 1991. Since then it has emerged as a top company within the small niche market of emergency vehicle manufacturers. Of the 5,000-6,000 vehicles produced each year, AEV builds 1,400 for private providers, municipalities, volunteer organizations and 911 services across the U.S. and around the world.

## Standing Out from the Competition

Created from an existing small, regional company, AEV relocated to its current facility in 1996 and added a separate paint shop in 2005. Within the highly competitive business of emergency vehicle manufacturing, the company increased output to produce approximately 25 percent of all emergency vehicles annually. "Our engineers and technicians are dedicated to innovation with the highest levels of safety and quality," comments Jeff Dreyer, Director of Manufacturing for AEV.

Now with 500 employees, AEV continues to maintain the family-oriented atmosphere of its early years. "We make customers feel welcome and at home, and don't hide anything from them," says Dreyer. "New customers are typically blown away when they see our facility and usually make a purchase."

Technicians build most assemblies in the AEV facilities, allowing for complete quality control. "We have a reputation as experts at combining the craft of custom vehicle production with the consistency of modern manufacturing techniques," Dreyer notes. This approach has earned AEV the Ford Motor Company

Qualified Vehicle Modifier status every year since the company was founded. Customers can choose a basic emergency unit, one with fully customized specifications or other options in between.

## Community Connections

AEV takes excellent care of its customers, and is committed to creating a safety-oriented environment for employees as well. In 2008, the company received a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star certification from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). This distinction is reserved for companies that maintain comprehensive, successful safety and health management systems. Less than one percent of companies in North Carolina receive VPP Star certification, and AEV was the first in Ashe County to do so.

AEV extends the personal approach to its Jefferson, N.C. community. "AEV is committed to giving back to the community in which we live and work," Dreyer states. The company sponsors local soccer, Little League and softball teams, as well as golf tournaments. AEV also provides education endowments and is involved with the Ashe Civic Center, Ashe County Arts Council

and the Ashe Sharing Center. This year the company proudly won the Governor's Award for Volunteerism, based on the number of hours that employees volunteer.

### Continuity and Flexibility

When AEV moved part of its operations to a new facility, the company faced continuity issues between locations. IT Manager George Rembert wondered how, with workers in two locations, everyone could work from the same servers without slowing them down. The problem was solved with Metro-E, an Ethernet system that supports companies with multiple sites needing to share bandwidth. "With Metro-E from SkyBest, we can move our employees back and forth between locations and they won't notice a change in network performance," observes Rembert. Brent Keith, Strategic Sales Supervisor at SkyLine/SkyBest, adds, "Our Metro Ethernet solution allows AEV to link their two facilities together to share data network resources." SkyBest's fiber-based broadband service also keeps AEV connected with offices outside the local area and provides sufficient bandwidth to excel in a competitive manufacturing market.

**With Metro-E from SkyBest, we can move our employees back and forth between locations and they won't notice a change in network performance."**

— **GEORGE REMBERT**, IT MANAGER, AEV

For voice services, SkyBest offers the flexibility of Primary Rate Interface (PRI) for AEV's phone system. "With a PRI, we can offer direct inward dialing to many of our employees, reducing the workload of our receptionist and making it easier for customers and vendors to reach the right person," notes Rembert. The upgrade increased available phone lines from 11 to 23 and enabled caller ID at the end-user phone, further improving office staff efficiency.

SkyBest has worked closely with the staff and management team at AEV since 1995. Keith says, "Our goal is to support their ongoing efforts as a valuable part of the community by keeping them equipped with the connectivity they need to be successful now and in the future."



AEV assembles 30 ambulances each week that are sent all over the country.



Jeff Dreyer, AEV Director of Manufacturing, at the new AEV facility

## SkyLine/SkyBest Helped AEV Expand

In 2005 SkyLine/SkyBest awarded two zero-interest Revolving Loan Fund loans to local businesses, and one of them was American Emergency Vehicles (AEV), which received \$125,000. The funds were used toward AEV's \$2 million expansion of a new paint facility that resulted in 50 new jobs. AEV was able to purchase equipment including a paint booth, bake oven, air dryer, air lines and control panel.

Jeff Dreyer, Director of Manufacturing for AEV says, "Vacating space in our main facility allowed us to reconfigure and add additional product lines. Because we were able to hire more people, this was a win-win for AEV and Ashe County. You could say that the Revolving Loan Fund helped us to grow to the nearly 500 employees we have today. Who knows if we would be where we are today without it."

The loan program was established in 1994 when SkyLine received a grant from the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to establish a revolving loan fund to support economic development projects throughout its service area.



# Common Misconceptions About Internet Speeds

*Here's the reality—your business needs more speed for more productivity*

There are some common misconceptions out there about internet speeds, particularly among owners of small businesses. It's unfortunate, since inadequate internet speeds can slow down workflow and prevent a business from keeping pace with customer demands. Here's your reality check:

**Misconception: The internet connection our business signed up for several years ago is fine. There's no reason to change things.**

**Reality:** If you haven't given much thought to your internet speed since it was installed, you're doing your business a disservice. As your business grows and technology evolves, your connection needs to change as well. After all, so much business activity is now done online, and data-intensive applications require faster data speeds. If you want to stay ahead of your competition, you need to be working as fast as, or faster than they are.

**Misconception: Slow internet doesn't affect my productivity.**

**Reality:** Think how often you use the internet each day and how much time you waste with a slow connection. In some cases, it could take several additional minutes to access key information from a vendor's catalog or upload large photo files. What's your time worth? And what's your employees' time worth?

**Misconception: If I have faster internet speeds, my employees will just spend more time "surfing" instead of getting work done.**

**Reality:** Many studies have shown efficiencies in the workplace are far more likely when the right tools are being used. In today's business environment, it's essential to have adequate internet speeds. If they're painfully slow, your staff is more likely to cut corners—not looking for additional vendor quotes, settling for less than complete research on competitors or electing to not check emails as often—which can cost your business money. Having the right tools for the job also has a direct impact on retaining quality employees.

**Misconception: My customers are not affected by my lack of adequate internet speeds.**

**Reality:** Even if your customers never come in direct contact with your internet connection, it can have an impact on their experience with you. For example, if they have to wait for you to pull up information while they're on the phone or in your office, it can give the impression that your business is not as efficient or as professional as others. Today, everyone expects instant results and a sense of urgency is the norm.

**To find out more about the variety of high-speed internet solutions offered by SkyBest, call our Business Sales Team at 1-844-SKYBEST.**



# Welcome New Businesses!

When you buy local, everyone benefits. Please support the community by doing business with these new SkyBest customers.

## Boone Area

Allen Wealth Management  
Allen Yates Realty  
Animal Hospital of Boone  
Appalachian Commercial Real Estate  
Appalachian Family Chiropractic  
Appalachian Mountain Brewery  
Appalachian Voices  
App Regional Healthcare Systems  
Beverly Guy Accounting  
Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture  
Bluebird Exchange  
Boone Healing Arts Center

Boone Neurological Services  
Boone Police Department  
Boone Real Estate  
Boone Rent-All  
Casa Rustica  
Christy & Co  
Coldwell Banker Blair & Associates  
Combs, Tennant & Carpenter  
Cornerstone Bookstore  
Coyote Kitchen  
CR Catering  
Curves

Fidler Chiropractic Center  
Fit 24  
High Country Grizzlies  
Hodges Real Estate  
John Barry, CPA  
John J. Freeman  
Juice Boone  
Log House Florist  
Makoto's  
Mysterium Escape Adventure  
New River Building Supply  
Noble Kava

R-Salon  
Sassy & Company  
Strand Beads & Jewelry  
The Greenhouse  
The Wesley Foundation – ASU  
Village Pharmacy  
Wellborn Shell

## Lenoir Area

Abigail's Gifts  
Anything Office  
Appalachian Tire & Auto  
Caldwell Animal Hospital  
Central Barber Shop  
Chick-Fil-A  
Communities in Schools

D & S Tire and Auto  
Dead Wax Records  
Fleischer Law Office  
Foothills Framing  
Forbes Printing  
G's Used Cars  
Helping Hands Clinic

Lenoir Smokes  
MaryKae's Clothing  
NickGreene.com  
Pack and Ship Mail Center  
Pancho Villa  
Patriot Insurance Agency  
Pennell Properties

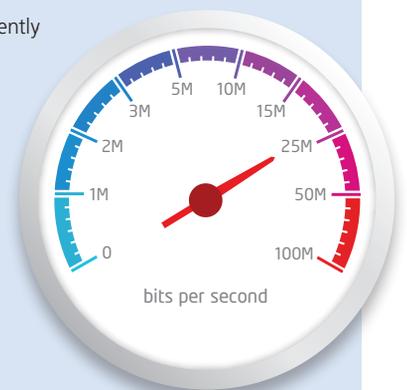
Pro Hair Stylist  
Reliable Insurance Agency  
Sanders Communications  
Shields Hardware  
The Rusty Rooster  
United Way of Caldwell Co.  
Wallace Resesp Law

## The Latency Effect

Do you have an internet connection that's supposed to be fast but seems slow? It could be due to latency, which is how long it takes for data to travel. The greater the latency, the longer it takes for you to connect to online sources. It might manifest as delays during a Skype conversation, for example.

Latency is different than your internet upload and download speed. It refers to the quality of your connection, and lower latency is better. No matter what kind of connection you have, latency can be an issue, but it's especially common with wireless networks. That's why a 15 Mbps satellite connection may seem much slower than a 15 Mbps fiber-optic internet connection. Network hardware, the location of the other server and the number of routers in between can all contribute to latency. The SkyLine/SkyBest network has a unique design created by our engineering team to limit latency issues and ensure a positive online experience.

If your internet connection is consistently slow, there are some steps you can take. First, use a speed test to measure your latency as well as upload and download speeds. We recommend the ookla-based speed test at [SkyBestSupport.net](http://SkyBestSupport.net). This test will help you to identify if your experience is related to low speeds or high latency. Remember, high speed and low latency will provide you with the best online experience.



**For more help optimizing your internet speed, call our Business Sales Team at 1-844-SKYBEST.**



*“With Metro-E from SkyBest, we can move our employees back and forth between locations and they won’t notice a change in network performance.”*

— GEORGE REMBERT, IT MANAGER,  
AMERICAN EMERGENCY VEHICLES

**Metro-E is an Ethernet solution that supports companies with multiple sites needing to share bandwidth.** When American Emergency Vehicles moved part of its operations to a new facility, Metro-E enabled its employees in two locations to work from the same servers without slowing them down.

To learn more, contact our Business Sales Team at **1-844-SKYBEST** or **BusinessSolutions@skyline.org**.

