

Montana's 2006 Governor's Safety and Health Award Given to Blackfoot Telecommunications Group

Blackfoot Telecommunications Group received top honors as the Large Private Employer of the Year at Montana's annual Governor's Conference on Workers' Compensation and Occupational Safety, held in September in West Yellowstone, Mont.

Human Resource Manager Laura Marshall accepted the award for Blackfoot and gave credit to Blackfoot CEO Joan Mandeville, acknowledging that "creating a safety culture really does start at the top, and Joan genuinely cares about our employees' safety."

Blackfoot was recognized for establishing a wide array of effective safety and health wellness programs. Over the past three years, more than 75 separate topics have been covered in safety classes taught at Blackfoot. Blackfoot also received accolades for adding workplace safety to employee reviews, in an effort to promote safety as a top company priority.

Among the most notable of Blackfoot's many initiatives are the free CPR and first aid certification and training sessions, offered to all employees during regular work hours. Blackfoot also received kudos for participating in "Move Missoula," a Missoula City-County Health Department program that encourages employees to take breaks, get out from behind their desks, and walk around the campus neighborhood.

"This award really belongs to all our employees," said Marshall at the awards ceremony. "It's really a thank you for their commitment to workplace safety."

The Governor's Health and Safety Awards are the highest honor given by the state of Montana for recognition of an employer's commitment to excellence in workplace safety and health.

Named after the Blackfoot River running through much of the territory it serves, Blackfoot Telecommunications Group was originally established in 1954 as Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative. Blackfoot offers state-of-the-art telecommunications, Internet and data solutions to customers in Missoula and 22 other communities in western Montana and Idaho. Headquartered in Missoula, Montana, Blackfoot employs more than 165 Montanans. Blackfoot can be reached at 406-541-5000 or through its web site at <http://www.blackfoot.com> .

Contact: Lindsey Rhynard Blackfoot Telecommunications Group Phone: (406) 541-5020 FAX: (406) 541-5099 1221 N. Russell St. Missoula, MT 59808 www.blackfoot.com