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Connecting People and Communities



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When raging wildfires broke out near the Montana towns of Augusta and Choteau in 2007, public safety was paramount. The protection of lives and property depended on the rapid response of fire and rescue workers, who, in turn, needed a reliable communications infrastructure. 3 Rivers Communications worked quickly to provide remote fire camps with temporary telephone and high-speed Internet service in a very short period of time.

"Our technicians installed 40 phone lines and four DSL Internet connections," explains 3 Rivers' new General Manager, Steve Krogue. "We also installed three T1 broadband circuits for each of two temporary cell sites on wheels, to enable cell service in areas not covered by existing cell towers."

For more than 50 years, Montana communities, companies and consumers have relied on 3 Rivers Communications for everything from community-wide 911 systems to television entertainment. Indeed, 3 Rivers has remained committed to serving some of the state's most isolated regions when other telephone and television service providers have not. The reason is simple — 3 Rivers' priority is people, not profits.

As a cooperative, 3 Rivers Communications is owned by its customers. Each subscriber accrues capital credits in direct relation to the amount of services they receive. Credits are returned to the members in the form of annual cash dividends, which can average \$100 to \$150 per household, or reach tens of thousands of dollars for large companies.

But it's not just the dividend that attracts customers — it's the outstanding service by professionals who feel a genuine responsibility not just to customers, but to their *neighbors*. All employees are residents of the areas in which they work. That means

rapid, reliable response, whether installing a new service or repairing an existing one.

"We have our own call center," explains Don Serido, Corporate Marketing Manager. "When people call in with questions or need help, they're talking with a live person right in their own area, not in some other state or country."



Steve Krogue
General Manager

3 Rivers Communications works diligently to provide the most up-to-date technology. The company is currently installing fiber optic cable to more areas, to make high-speed Internet accessible to more people. It also proudly represents DIRECTV®, offering hundreds of channels, including many in high-definition (HD). And soon, 3 Rivers will offer Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) in some areas, to provide television programming over telephone lines.

3 Rivers' commitment to quality goes beyond communications. The company offers community enhancement grants of up to \$5,000 to nonprofit organizations and other local groups for such projects as library expansions, tourism promotion, economic development and more. It's all about making life better for people who would rather live in the Big Sky State than anywhere else.

"A good communication infrastructure is critical for any kind of economic development," Krogue says. "By offering great communication services, we can help communities keep existing businesses and lure others to come in."

