

# American Emergency Vehicles

Providing quality ambulances to lifesavers around the world.



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.



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

## 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.

## 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.



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.

## 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.

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- 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."