

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Wired

Company keeps visitors plugged in

Satellite, Internet installed in remote developments

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When two exclusive, remote North Idaho residential developments needed telecommunications systems to provide urban amenities, they called on CSK Communications Inc.

The eight-person Spokane firm has designed and is installing state-of-the-art fiber-optic and cable infrastructure at the pricey Gozzer Ranch on Lake Coeur d'Alene. The backbone will allow hundreds of residents to get satellite TV and high-speed Internet services and allow operators to control the ranch's water system remotely.

"That's what people want now days," said president and co-owner Jim Burke, 53. "Everything's high-tech, and if you don't have high-tech, you're not going to get that component of people that want to be out there in the rural environment, but they want the computers and their iPods."

Billed as a "one-stop shop" for communications infrastructure, the company is about to create a similar utility-grade system at the 82-home The Crossing at Willow Bay development on the Pend Oreille River, Burke said. Other clients include federal agencies and local companies.

By finding niche work, five-year-old CSK Communications has roughly doubled its revenues yearly, said Burke, who projects revenues of \$750,000 to \$1 million this year. The company this month moved from the Spokane technology-business incubator Sirti to an office in Millwood.

Utilities or various contractors typically would install the backbones CSK Communications creates, Burke said.



Jake Zachman, of CSK Communications, lifts the cover of a utility box that is part of the Internet and satellite TV system infrastructure that CSK installed to service Gozzer Ranch, a development on Lake Coeur d'Alene. CSK enables rural communities to have the same technology services available to urban dwellers. The Spokesman-Review (JESSE TINSLEY The Spokesman-Review)

Burke, an electrical engineer, and co-owner Dan Stutzke, a master electrician, started the company after leaving decades-long careers at Avista Corp. They founded and helped run Avista's project to create a fiber optic network through its service territory. Then Avista sold the fiber division.

"We weren't highly employable at the time, so we decided to start our own company," Burke said.

CSK Communications is starting its second year of work at Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Discovery Land Co.'s Gozzer Ranch. Located about 30 minutes south of Coeur d'Alene by car, the 700-acre development offers a marina, clubhouses and a golf course. It will include 270 custom homes, 60 custom cottages and two condominium projects, and CSK Communications will be installing cable for another 10 years to keep up with construction, said John Goodlander, general manager of the ranch's homeowner's association.

"In our project, we didn't want to have, you know, satellite dishes on all of the homes and everything," Goodlander said. "They came in and designed and engineered an infrastructure that basically runs out of one location."

That location is the "head-end room," which holds racks of electronic devices that connect satellite TV signals and T1 cable lines with wires running to houses and offices. The company has installed roughly 15 miles of fiber-optic and coaxial cable there, Burke said, and he expects to run nearly four more miles of coaxial.

The infrastructure also supports a system allowing officials to control the ranch's water purification and distribution system, a security camera system and gigabit Ethernet for ranch offices.

"It opens your eyes a lot to the potential of a business," Burke said. "People are willing to use some unique designs if you can show them it's going to help their profit margins."

The company's next big target is the federal government. Because Burke lost a kneecap in a typhoon in the South China Sea during the 1970s, he said, the company can take advantage of a recent federal provision for disabled veterans.

CSK Communications installed four remote-controlled ramp cameras for the Federal Aviation Administration at SeaTac Airport so air traffic controllers can see around corners while airplanes back up, Burke said.

CSK Communications also services Catholic Charities Spokane, including installing Web cameras in every classroom at St. Anne's Children and Family Center that let parents check in on their kids.

"They really have cutting-edge technology, and they have been very generous in terms of their pricing, especially for a nonprofit like Catholic Charities," said Rob McCann,

executive director. "The result is that we have some really state-of-the-art stuff in social services facilities, which is not the norm in this country."