

Butte Falls links to wireless world

Mountaintop cell tower allows the town to access cell phone service for the first time

By Bill Miller
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BUTTE FALLS — Until just few days ago, simply phoning home while walking through the city park was impossible. But now, with completion of the town's first cell phone tower, residents can push a button and call around the world.

U.S. Cellular spent about six months building the new 120-foot tower on a mountaintop just north of town.

Friday afternoon, the company hosted a celebration party in Ernest W. Smith Memorial Park.

"I can't believe it," said Carol, a Butte Falls resident who didn't want to give her last name. "We actually have cell phone service in Butte Falls now, which is amazing. It's hard to believe that we had no coverage before."

Shortly after the tower was activated on May 30, a curious Carol and her husband drove their 4-wheel drive truck up the long gravel road for a first-hand look.

"It's huge!" she said. "I admit I'm a country bumpkin, but I was standing right under it and it's probably a normal-size tower, but I've never seen anything like that."

"We're always analyzing where and why we need sites," said Calvin Emigh, U.S. Cellular's director of sales for Oregon. "This was a cell site that expanded the company's existing footprint and has a very large coverage area."

Emigh said company engineers have been able to hold onto calls from Highway 62 near Prospect, all the way south, to Highway 140.