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## NEWS RELEASE

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May 25, 2006

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## 2006 Awards of Excellence Presented At Tulsa Safety Summit

*Labor Commissioner & WSPC Honors Five Oklahoma  
Employers*

*Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor Joins Praise for John Zink Company, LLC*

TULSA -- Commissioner of Labor Brenda Reneau, chairman of the Worker Safety Policy Council (WSPC), presented the Award of Excellence to five outstanding Oklahoma employers at the 2006 Governor's Conference on Safety and Health on Thursday (May 25). Reneau and other officials honored employers for achieving the best health and safety standards in Oklahoma workplaces.

The top recognition annually honors outstanding performance in creation of a safety culture in the workplace. The *Safety Culture Award* this year was presented to Tulsa's **John Zink Company LLC**. The council's evaluation, Reneau said, praised employee involvement and cross-training in safety programs and Zink's ability to identify and correct hazards before incidents occur. Reneau said she admired Zink's "empowerment of employees to resolve issues." Zink, she noted, has exceeded one year and 2.4 million man-hours worked without a single "lost time accident." "Lost time accident" describes lost work hours/days due to a work-related injury or illness.

When Commissioner Reneau relayed news of the company's honors, Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor also praised Zink and its employees. "Just as public safety is the number one priority for our City, employee safety must be the number one priority for all employers. This requires not only a strong commitment from top management, but also consistent vigilance from all employees. At the end of the day, we all want to go home to our family safely. I am proud that the John Zink Company has helped to set the

standard for educating employees about the importance of safety in the workplace, and that Zink employees take their safety responsibilities so seriously,” Taylor said.

All Zink employees receive health and safety instruction before they start work and are trained to detect hazards and report them. The management team and employees conduct root cause analyses when severe hazards are identified, investigate and correct risks before incidents occur. Zink is a member of the Environmental Protection Agency performance track and recognized as one of the top seven nationwide performers.



John Zink Company engineers and manufactures burner and air pollution equipment for a wide range of industries such as refineries, small industries, hospitals and schools. The company employs about 680 personnel. Since 1993, Zink has drastically reduced work-related accidents and worker’s compensation costs. “Safety is our first priority,” Health and Safety Manager Ed Barnaby said. The company awarded an extra paid vacation day in 2006 to celebrate recent safety program successes.

The 2006 *Award of Excellence, Public Sector*, was presented to **Pontotoc County** for its "total program" -- including consistent safety training, management and employee participation, and two-way communication to ensure safety and health guidelines are followed. Pontotoc County’s approach paid off with a dramatic drop in medical payments due to work-related injuries and illnesses – from \$13,447 in 2004 to \$0 in 2005. “I’ve said it over and over -- ‘*Safety Pays*®,’ ” Reneau said. "In this case both worker and taxpayers are the clear winners."

At a time of tremendous challenges for Oklahoma manufacturers, a major facility remains strong in safety and other benchmarks of success. The *Award of Excellence, Large Employer* was presented to **Michelin Ardmore**. Reneau praised the company's "Respect for People" philosophy and innovative “Safety Day” events, including empowerment of employees through standing safety committees. Reneau is a strong supporter of the tire manufacturer's programs to boost the involvement of workers in the production process.

Reneau commented, "Michelin Ardmore is one of the bright lights in the constellation of Oklahoma's high achieving and profitable businesses." In three years, the company has seen an 83% reduction in lost time accidents, a 55% cut in recordable incidents, and a 67% drop in the number of lost/restricted work days. Workers’ comp costs have dropped a remarkable 45%.

The *Award of Excellence, Medium Employer*, was presented to **Acord Transportation Inc., of Chandler** for commitment to training, communication among employees to make programs successful, and worker involvement to build a safety environment. In 2003, the company's total job-related medical claims were \$24,294. In 2005, claims were zero. Last November, Commissioner Reneau touted Acord at a Chandler ceremony after the firm became the first transportation company in state history to

achieve the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) certification.

The *Award of Excellence, Small Employer*, was presented to **FMRI, Inc. of Muskogee** for its continuous safety improvements, defined educational programs and ability to reach objectives through team effort. FMRI, Inc received a one-year federal OSHA inspection exemption/SHARP award in November 2005.

Commissioner Reneau, who is elected statewide, is statutory chairman of the Worker Safety Policy Council. Select members of the Council serve as judges for the Award of Excellence program. The 18-member council meets quarterly "to study and formulate reforms for worker safety that could result in lower work-related injuries" and reduced workers' comp costs.

In Fiscal Year 2005, the state *Safety Pays*<sup>®</sup> OSHA Consultation program at the Labor Department first identified and then worked with employers to eliminate more than 3200 serious hazards in workplaces. State Consultations provide free, non-punitive, voluntary, confidential and guaranteed service. Consultants do not assess fines or write citations and company information is not shared with federal OSHA.

"The Oklahoma Department of Labor may be the best taxpayer bargain in state government," Reneau said. In the last year, we cost the taxpayers \$6.3 million in state and federal money, but in one division alone our employees saved Oklahoma businesses at least \$7.5 million. We give more back to taxpayers than we receive in tax funding. That means more money for value to customers, to the bottom line, for employee pay, and to fund shareholder dividends."

Testifying before a House budget review meeting in November 2005, Reneau asserted, "*Safety Pays*<sup>®</sup> is workers' comp reform in Oklahoma."

As The Tulsa World reported (November 23, 2005) , "Reneau has been all over the state pushing the department's occupational safety and health consultation service" called *Safety Pays*<sup>®</sup>. The SHARP recognition results from cooperative efforts between state and federal agencies.

The recipients of this year's Award of Excellence, both public and private, are recognized for astonishing results in workers' safety and health efficiency and improvements during the past year. Each employer honored sought to diminish work-related accidents and prevent on-the-job injuries and illnesses.

Commissioner Reneau's colleague, Commissioner of Insurance Kim Holland, was honorary Master of Ceremonies for this week's 2006 Governor's Conference on Safety and Health, hosted by the Oklahoma Safety Council. Frank Strasheim, acting Regional Administrator for Federal OSHA also participated in the Conference.

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