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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **2004 Award of Excellence Goes to Koch Pipeline, Medford** *Labor Commissioner Honors Grant County Business*

OKLAHOMA CITY – Commissioner of Labor Brenda Reneau Wynn will present the 2004 Award of Excellence to **Koch Pipeline, LP** of Medford on Monday, May 17. She will formally give the honors during a health and safety conference in Enid.

In announcing the 2004 Awards of Excellence, she hailed Oklahoma employers, both public and private, for significant improvements in health and safety over the past year. Presenting the 2004 Award recipients, she expressed hope for continued progress in Oklahoma, where a positive trend in workplace safety has attracted attention in recent months.

**Koch** of Medford won the **Medium Employer Award** for 2004, after recording only one OSHA lost workday cases in the last five years. Recordable injuries/illnesses have also been admirably limited for many years – only two in 2002 and one in 2003. While growing slowly to 105 employees (up from 99 in 2000), the business has managed to trim its workers' compensation insurance premiums to \$2,658 in 2003 – after a \$58,417 spike due to one claim filed in 2002.

In related news, the Cushing terminal of Koch Pipeline, LP has won the **Small Employer Award**. With 6 employees, that company had no recordable injuries/illnesses from 1999 to 2003, and no lost workdays.

The labor commissioner is making presentations to a public school district and to four businesses, in recognition of the practical and effective steps they have taken to improve working conditions and safety for employees. She called attention to “sometimes breath-taking savings in workers compensation premiums and related costs.”

The commissioner will present the awards Monday afternoon at the 2003 Governor's Safety & Health Conference at the Cherokee Strip Conference Center and Mark Price Arena in Enid. The conference is sponsored by the Oklahoma Safety Council, a key member of the Worker Safety Policy Council (WSPC), a public-private alliance. Reneau Wynn, now serving an unprecedented third term as Oklahoma's elected commissioner, is also chairman of the WSPC.

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“I’ve said over and over that ‘Safety Pays.’ The cumulative record of workers’ compensation cost cuts in these companies is simply wonderful. The money they save is available for company growth and new investment in Oklahoma. These employers recognize that safety is not merely a priority, it’s a value that must be included in every aspect of operations,” Reneau Wynn said. “Effective health and safety programs involve both management and employees – and that’s good business. A culture of safety and excellence – and profitability – reflects the daily work life for each of these award recipients.”

Besides Koch’s Medford and Cushing facilities, those honored with the 2004 Award of Excellence, and their respective categories, include:

\* The prestigious **Safety Culture Award** went to the **John Zink Company** of Tulsa. After job losses in 2002 (dropping from 862 employees to 688), this manufacturing and management company recovered to 730 employees in 2003. Zink prides itself on an outstanding environmental, health and safety record. An advocate of free-market environmentalism, Zink believes professional risk management promotes environmental protection and promotes worker safety. The company is self-insured.

\* **Broken Arrow Public Schools, Public Sector Award.** This public school district has made steady progress in workers’ compensation cost reductions. In 1999, workers’ comp premiums were \$241,438. After a decline in 2000, the costs spiked again in 2001, hitting \$183,126. But after a slight drop in 2002, premiums fell to \$19,243 in 2003. That’s a cut of 92 percent since the 1999 costs. The cost data plays out in the human dimension: recordable injuries/illnesses fell from 92 in 1999-2000 to 23 in 2003-04. Lost workdays were at 22 in 99-00, but were only 3 in 03-04.

\* The **Large Employer Award** of Excellence went to **Chicago Rawhide** of Hobart (Kiowa County). This company, now with 257 employees, has made steady progress in trimming workers’ comp insurance premiums, from \$128,172 in 1999 to \$17,863 – a 86 percent reduction. Whereas there were 32 OSHA recordable injuries/illnesses in 1999, there were only two in 2003. Lost workdays went from 16 to 2 in the same time period. Perhaps most impressive, the recordable injuries/illnesses were 20 and lost workdays were 13 in 2002 – but, as noted, only two each in 2003.

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