SUPER BOWL LII
Nicollet Mall effort prepping for the spectacle and beyond
Aircraft Safety
Xcel Energy enters first-ever partnership with the FAA.

Nicollet Mall
Company a major player in effort to renew downtown mall.

New Service Centers
Multiple construction projects coming together in Wisconsin.

Sherco Gas
A new unit is on the table for Sherco Generating Station.

LED Bulbs
New promotion supports new lightbulb technology for customers.

Fishing
Employee’s nonprofit effort aimed at helping underprivileged kids.

People
The most recent Friends We’ll Miss and Retirements.

On the Cover
Super Bowl LII will be held at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis next February, and the company is working to help refresh downtown’s Nicollet Mall in front of the big event. For more information, please see page eight.
(Editor’s Note: Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, periodically writes a blog on XpressNet, as well as other articles and communications. Xtra features Fowke’s comments on a recurring basis to share his thoughts with a wider audience.)

“<It’s the difference between simply living and the opportunity to prosper.”

Those are powerful words, and they were impactful to me because that is how Dominique Moore-Jones described his experience as a STEP-UP intern at Xcel Energy.

STEP-UP Achieve connects Minneapolis youth ages 16 to 21 with paid internships at nearly 150 companies, public agencies and nonprofit organizations across 17 industries.

I recently had the chance to catch up with Dominique at a breakfast at Target Field to kick-off the 2017 STEP-UP internship program.

Dominique is an impressive young man and a great example of how we use internship programs to introduce students to careers at Xcel Energy. It’s a win-win because we can make a meaningful difference in a young person’s life, and at the same time, potentially land a talented new employee.

That is how it worked with Dominique.

His STEP-UP internship was in Legal Accounting, but his work caught the eye of others in the company, including Jeff Custer in Design and Construction. Jeff was so impressed with Dominique that he hired him to a full-time contract position as an electric designer.

Dominique’s story is a great example of why I am so committed to bringing interns into our organization. Interns have the opportunity to gain work and life skills and explore career opportunities, and we all benefit from different perspectives and the energy interns bring to the workplace.

It’s an important way that we’re making a difference. ✤
A first-of-its-kind partnership between Xcel Energy and the Federal Aviation Administration will research the safe operation of drone technology to inspect critical infrastructure.

The agreement involves using unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to inspect more than 20,000 miles of Xcel Energy transmission lines in 10 states.

“We’re proud to partner with the FAA to explore ways unmanned aircraft systems can enhance public safety while protecting the national grid and gas pipelines,” said Kent Larson, executive vice president and group president of Operations. “Drone technology is already giving us better inspection data to efficiently and effectively monitor our systems, while also ensuring employee safety and improving reliability to better serve our customers.”

Among the goals of the joint Partnership for Safety Plan is to shape future FAA policies for safe and routine “beyond line of sight” operations to inspect the electrical grid. The FAA and Xcel Energy will plan and develop safety measures, and then evaluate outcomes. Xcel Energy has previously worked with the FAA to advance UAS guidelines for the energy sector.

Overall, Xcel Energy’s UAS program continues to evolve, build momentum and drive operational excellence, said Eileen Lockhart, UAS program manager.

“We now have conducted about a dozen outdoor UAS missions and more than 30 indoor missions,” she said. “And we’re excited about the prospect for additional missions in 2017 as we seek to further integrate drones into our operations to improve safety, reliability and efficiency.”

Plenty of work was accomplished in 2016. For instance, last year the company began a year-long research project in partnership with the state of North Dakota, the University of North Dakota and other partners to use drone technology to assess damage after severe weather events.

The project was awarded a $500,000 matching grant from the state of North Dakota for the commercialization of post-storm damage assessment utilizing unmanned aircraft. The company is sharing its operational and safety data with the FAA and the Edison Electric Institute.

One of the challenges in a natural disaster is reaching and inspecting damage in hard hit areas, Lockhart said. Using unmanned aircraft systems to send information back to a control center to be analyzed immediately should help reduce outage time and save money.
The working team used the North Dakota city of Mayville as its test site and utilized a Hermes 450 fixed-wing UAS to complete several flights over the city. The Hermes 450 can cover 40,000 acres in an hour and fly up to 17 hours before refueling.

“The first flights captured a baseline of the distribution system,” said Troy Browen, director of Control Center and Trouble Operations. “In partnership with the Grand Forks design and construction group, we placed other distribution equipment throughout the city to mimic storm damage for the second flights.”

The company plans to utilize the data captured from the two flight paths to compare outputs and identify next steps, he added. The effort also worked with General Electric to provide a software solution to perform the storm assessment, using Xcel Energy SmallWorld data in conjunction with the aerial imagery captured by the UAS.

“Xcel Energy is a leader in adopting this technology for new and innovative uses,” said U.S. Senator John Hoeven of North Dakota during a demonstration of the technology. “Beyond line of sight operations are absolutely vital in these kinds of tests, and will help Xcel Energy and their partners to develop methods to quickly respond to and correct power outages due to natural disasters.”

In Transmission, a team flew a “beyond line of site” mission last year in Texas to inspect a high-voltage line and substation. That mission should pave the way for even greater use of UAS in transmission line inspections in the coming years, said Brian Long, manager of Transmission Maintenance and Reliability Analytics.

On the indoor front, a team of Energy Supply Technical Services engineers and plant engineers continue to use UAS to inspect boilers and other internal plant components. The team has performed more than 30 flights, which have delivered tangible savings and provided safety value by not having to build scaffolds and expose workers to heights, according to Dave Anderson, principal engineer.

As inspections proceed, the team is refining procedures and drone technology itself to implement compliant, safe and effective indoor inspections, he said, as well as explore other applications.

Many other organizations also are active in support of the UAS program, Lockhart said. Legal Services, for example, assisted the UAS Program Office with the interpretation and impact analysis of the new small-UAS rules by the federal government, commonly referred to as Part 107. Legal also tracks relevant legislation at both the state and federal level, and helps the program navigate state registration requirements for its fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles, she added.

And Supply Chain has partnered with Legal Services in negotiating the commercial agreements necessary for successful operation of the program. Other areas taking advantage of the technology include Vegetation Management, Utility Analytics, Siting and Land Rights and more.

**Partnership**

A joint Partnership for Safety Plan between Xcel Energy and the FAA will help shape future government policies for safe and routine “beyond-visual-line-of-sight” operations to inspect the electrical grid. The effort will plan and develop safety measures, and then evaluate outcomes. Xcel Energy has previously worked with the FAA to advance UAS guidelines for the energy sector.
Emergency situations are not always obvious. Knowing how to properly assess the signs of an emergency and how to react to it are important skills.

Those skills and more were successfully demonstrated by Dena Stai, a team lead at the Customer Contact Center in Eau Claire, Wis. For her efforts to sustain – if not save – the life of a fellow employee, Dena Stai recently was recognized with the Xcel Energy Life Sustaining Award.

On a warm day last year, just a few hours into his shift as an associate in the Customer Contact Center, Jason Doerr Sr. said he began feeling strange. While he attempted to work on through the day, he soon realized that he needed to go home, so he went to tell his supervisor, Stai.

“My intuition kicked in, and I knew something was not right,” Stai said. “He was extremely passive, which is not his usual character, and his appearance was different. There was that ‘little voice’ telling me to pay attention to the signs.”

Stai reached out to Lisa Bishopp, a correspondence representative in the Customer Contact Center, who is also an emergency medical technician. After learning that Doerr’s blood pressure was dangerously high, Stai quickly contacted a family member to take him to the hospital, despite his insistence that he was OK to drive home and rest.

When Doerr got to the hospital his heart was only beating about 11 times a minute. He was suffering from a relatively uncommon heart-rhythm problem in which the sinus node – the heart’s natural pacemaker – doesn’t work properly. He now has a double-chamber pacemaker.

“I don’t remember much of what happened that day, but the medical staff did inform me that if I had left work on my own, I would not have made it home,” Doerr said. “Dena had the foresight to stop me, and it basically saved my life. For that, I thank her from the bottom of my newly repaired heart.”

Stai received her award during a staff meeting in which Mark Stoering, Xcel Energy president of Wisconsin and Michigan, recognized her for her caring and kind nature, and applauded her quick action.

“I like to think we all watch out for one another, but you took it a step further.” Stoering said. “You paid attention to your intuition and insisted on getting Jason the help he needed.”

Xcel Energy’s Journey to Zero has not only reduced injuries but also changed the company’s culture around safety, Stoering added.

“Employees are paying attention and watching out for others,” he said. “And it’s making a positive impact.”

In attendance at the award presentation were many of Doerr’s family members, including four who also work at Xcel Energy – his wife, Judy Doerr; son, Jason Doerr III; daughter, Felicia Bergeson; and daughter-in-law, MJ Doerr.

As the event concluded, Judy Doerr shared one last sentiment of heartfelt appreciation.

“Thank you,” she said. “You not only saved my husband, but the father of my children and a wonderful papa to our grandchildren.”
Year-end 2016 earnings announced

Xcel Energy reported 2016 GAAP and ongoing earnings of $1,123 million, or $2.21 per share, compared with GAAP earnings of $984 million, or $1.94 per share, and ongoing earnings of $1,064 million, or $2.09 per share, in 2015.

Increases in electric and natural gas margins were primarily driven by higher rates and riders across various jurisdictions to recover capital investments, as well as the favorable impact of weather as compared with the previous year.

These positive factors and a lower effective tax rate were partially offset by higher depreciation, interest charges and property taxes.

“We had an excellent year,” said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. “We achieved our financial targets and maintained a disciplined approach to managing costs. Our achievements in 2016 were the result of dedicated cost management, a continued focus on operational and commercial excellence, a commitment to stakeholder collaboration, and an engaged workforce.

“These fundamentals are the hallmark of Xcel Energy, and are why I am so proud of our long track record of success,” he added. “We also made significant advancements in our steel-for-fuel, wind-related growth strategy.

Xcel Energy completed the Courtenay Wind Farm, gained approval for the Rush Creek project in Colorado and proposed ownership of 750 megawatts of wind projects in the Upper Midwest. It also entered into a turbine agreement that secures the full production tax credit for the benefit of customers, and is pursuing investments of 500 to 1,000 megawatts of wind ownership in Texas and New Mexico.

“These investments will deliver significant value to our customers and shareholders,” Fowke said.

Xcel Energy reaffirmed its 2017 earnings guidance of $2.25 to $2.35 per share.

Annual damage-prevention award promotes safety, protects assets

Vannguard Utility Partners has been named the Damage Prevention Partner of the Year by Xcel Energy.

Operating in Xcel Energy’s Minnesota and North Dakota territories, Vannguard earned the award by performing 100 percent of its work on time in 2016, while improving overall quality in locates provided to the excavating community.

The annual award, given by Xcel Energy to a vendor, is based on overall timeliness, performance quality and customer service in protecting buried utility infrastructure, said Alicia Berger, manager for Damage Prevention, NSP-Minnesota.

All year long, the Damage Prevention team works to keep the company’s infrastructure safe from potential damage caused by excavation. It utilizes skilled in-house and contract technicians to accurately mark the location of buried natural gas and electric lines so excavators can safely perform their work.

“This important work helps protect workers and public safety,” she said. “I’m particularly proud of Vannguard for its level of customer service, and dedication to making the communities we serve a safer place to live and work.

“It’s important for everyone to know what’s below and call 8-1-1 before you dig,” she added, “no matter how big or small the project.”

New transmission lines completed in Texas and New Mexico

Another 25 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines are now complete on the company system in New Mexico and Texas.

The 13-milePCA-Quahada115-kilovolt transmission line project in New Mexico was completed two months ahead of schedule and energized at the end of February. The project included rebuilding the transmission line between the PCA Interchange and the new Quahada Interchange, both located northeast of Carlsbad.

“Hard work and dedication from the whole project team helped bring this project online ahead of schedule,” said Tiffany Graves, project manager. “We worked on a plan that allowed us to accelerate the work, and everyone did their part to make it happen.”

The PCA-Quahada project was completed to increase reliability and alleviate overload conditions in the area.

In Texas, construction on the 11-mile Wheeler-Coburn Creek 115-kilovolt transmission line project is also now complete. The project, located near Wheeler, Texas, included construction of the new Coburn Creek substation.

Both projects represent a combined $22 million investment.

In addition, construction will soon begin on the first 90-mile section of the 240-mile, $400 million TUCO-China Draw project. The 345-kilovolt transmission line will be built in both New Mexico and Texas.

As part of its Power for the Plains effort, Xcel Energy has invested in more than 800 miles of new transmission line and more than 10 substations in New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma since 2011. More than 700 additional miles of transmission line is planned for construction through 2021. The transmission expansion represents more than $3 billion in total investment.
In anticipation of the 2018 Super Bowl, Minneapolis is undertaking a major renovation of one of its primary downtown destinations – the Nicollet Mall.

The $50 million beautification and refresh of the mall includes new landscaping, sidewalks and public art. However, there is considerably more work involved in the ongoing Nicollet Mall refresh than meets the eye.

Underneath the mall and the 15-block area surrounding the site, lies an extensive network of Xcel Energy electric infrastructure supplying electricity to the downtown area. Xcel Energy crews have been hard at work to relocate those electric facilities, said Jeff Custer, director of Design, Distribution and Construction.

“Our electric services for the area include a series of manholes, ducts, cables and other equipment that runs the length of the Nicollet Mall and surrounding area,” he said. “And all of those facilities that provide service to the buildings along the mall are underground.

“In many places slated for renovation, our duct lines are under the streets and sidewalks, which requires us to relocate that equipment,” he added. “Along much of the route, the city is adding new green space and other street changes that conflict with our existing infrastructure.”

The company also has taken a proactive approach to the Nicollet Mall makeover, he said, considering the work with an eye to the future and taking advantage of the opportunity...
to upgrade its facilities to accommodate increased needs for electricity and flexibility in operating the electric system.

In the end, Xcel Energy crews will have constructed more than 4,500 feet of duct line, installed roughly 37,000 feet of cable, and rebuilt, modified or replaced more than two dozen manholes for the project.

“So in addition to relocating lines for the new construction on the mall, we are upgrading our equipment to maximize our flexibility in terms of meeting future needs,” Custer said.

Xcel Energy crews began work on the Nicollet Mall in January of 2016, with a commitment to a series of project milestones and specific deadlines. The first milestone to complete five blocks of work of the mall was met last June.

The bulk of the structural work — new concrete related to the moving of manholes and duct lines — was completed in late 2016, he said, along with the new cable installations and other electric work to accommodate new sidewalks and tree planters.

A grand opening for the newly renovated Nicollet Mall is slated for this summer.

The downtown Nicollet Mall area is home to the densest concentration of jobs and market values in the state. Roughly 130,000 workers use Nicollet Mall each day, and there are approximately 35,000 Minneapolis residents currently living in the downtown area of the city.

So not surprisingly, working in that densely populated and highly congested area brings a series of complications.
and challenges, Custer said. The closure of busy intersections for construction work, for example, requires careful coordination and communication between the various parties involved in the renovation, including other utilities and various city entities.

Xcel Energy crews have approached the work strategically, minimizing disruption to local businesses and customers by closing one intersection at a time, completing the necessary work and then moving on to another intersection, he said.

The crews’ focus has been on maximizing their productivity in a tight timeframe, while coordinating effectively with all involved parties and maintaining a focus on getting the work done safely.

“We know we need to be well-prepared before starting any phase of work there,” Custer said. “And that takes a lot of cooperation, coordination and communication.

“Getting our work done at a busy intersection, for example, is a well-orchestrated dance,” he added. “Overall, things have gone pretty well. We went into this work well aware of the challenges we faced – and we have planned accordingly.”

There have been few complaints by residents and customers about the construction, he said, pointing out that people understand that the project is one that will benefit businesses, customers and residents once completed.

In addition, Xcel Energy crews have been careful in how they complete their work, he added, keeping work sites as clean and well-organized as possible. During downtown celebrations like St. Patrick’s Day, for example, crews made sure job sites were well protected to keep visitors and residents safe.

“Public safety and public perceptions are constantly on our minds while we complete this work,” Custer said.

As with many projects in historic and congested areas, another challenge crews have faced is determining the exact placement of all of the underground electric facilities at the site.

“This network has been developed under the streets in downtown for many decades,” he said. “Our crews regularly run into this issue whenever they work in downtown areas with a lot of history, and the Nicollet Mall is no exception.

“You just have to find a way to work around the challenges,” he added. “And we have.”
Underground Work
Underneath the Nicollet Mall and the 15-block area surrounding the site in downtown Minneapolis lies an extensive network of Xcel Energy electric infrastructure supplying electricity to the area. Throughout the effort to redesign the mall, Xcel Energy crews have been hard at work to relocate those electric facilities.
As construction continues to move along at the Sky Park facility in Eau Claire, Wis. — now in year five of a five-year effort — work has wrapped up on the new Ironwood Service Center in Michigan.

Employees at the company’s only Michigan service center have moved from a windowless facility to a brand new building. The 18,000-square-foot building is located on 15 acres in Ironwood’s Industrial Park.

“In addition to windows, the new facility has nearly double the space for the welding shop, warehouse, vehicles, fleet bays and garage stalls,” said Tom Nicolay, facility manager for Wisconsin and Michigan with Property Services. “One of the biggest advantages of the new building is the addition of a tall, drive-through fleet bay.”

The former Ironwood Service Center, like the former Ashland Service Center in Wisconsin, was acquired through the Lake Superior District Power Co. merger in 1987. That facility was uniquely located on the site of the second largest mine on the Gogebic Iron Range, which in 1902 produced nearly 300,000 tons of iron ore.

In recent years, the company has filled in several abandoned mine shafts on the property and installed six-foot-high fencing around each site to protect the public from the threat posed by the unused mines, he said. The mine shafts, along with the unstable soil from the lumber industry, also caused the floors and foundation of the service center to shift.

While Ironwood winters can pose a construction challenge, Nicolay said Property Services made great progress — at least until an unusually wet summer took hold in 2016. Nonetheless, Michigan employees are happy about with their new location — with lots of natural light, far more space and improved security.

“Most was necessary, and we’ve been looking forward to making it happen,” said Mark Stoering, president of Xcel Energy – Wisconsin and Michigan. “We wanted to stay in Ironwood and by partnering with the city, we were able to build a facility that is nearly double in size, safer for our employees, and in a location that has better access to serve our customers in both Michigan and Wisconsin.”

The Ironwood Service Center is an operations hub for customers in a portion of the western Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin. Construction on the new facility started in June 2015 and wrapped up in December 2016.

Cheri Marchello, senior operations work coordinator, ranks windows high on the list of improvements in Ironwood.

“The only window at our old service center was at the front door,” said Marchello, who worked in the former facility for 13 years. “It's absolutely wonderful to see what the weather is doing and to have natural light shine in while you work.”

Xcel Energy is among 23 tenants in the Ironwood Industrial Park, which is adjacent to the Gogebic Country Club, Miners Memorial Heritage Park and Michigan’s Iron Belle Trail.
“We feel our new facility is a nice addition to the industrial park,” said Stacey Westeen, senior designer and Ironwood native. “It’s a great looking building – something we’re all proud of.”

In other Property Services news, the Phillips Service Center in northern Wisconsin, lost to a fire in February 2016, is being rebuilt at the same location. The new facility will be almost identical to the new building in Ironwood. Those similarities will result in cost savings and a simplified bidding process, Nicolay said.

Like the Ironwood facility, Phillips will have a 40-foot-tall, fleet-repair bay, which will allow crews to work on and test trucks, as well as work on truck booms inside and out of the elements. Construction crews are continuing work and expect completion in July.

In the meantime, the 17 employees displaced by the fire are working out of a nearby business incubator building, Nicolay said. Move-in is expected by late summer.

Also, nearly 18 months after a search began for space to accommodate the growing needs for the employees at the Hudson Service Center, the company has broken ground on a new 27,000-square-foot facility in the St. Croix Industrial Park in Hudson, Wis.

The new Hudson facility will be constructed on 16 acres, which will allow for space for future expansion, he said. The facility will include a bay for the weld shop and tools, as well as a tall fleet bay – neither of which exist at the current facility.

Interestingly, the land the company purchased was part of the family farm of Chuck Enloe, a master gas technician with the company. The family owned more than 500 acres in the area from the 1930s to the 1970s, and the new office will be located almost exactly on the spot of where Enloe’s childhood home once stood. The Hudson Service Center is expected to be completed in December.

“It is unprecedented for us to build three buildings in just two years,” Nicolay said. “They will help make our crews and employees more productive.”

And finally, the new buildings all can be remotely controlled and monitored from Sky Park. Xcel Energy’s Eau Claire facility is entering the final phase of its five-year master construction plan.

Regulatory, Accounting and the executive area recently moved to the newly remodeled second floor. And the former executive area is now being remodeled for Billing Services staff.

The Sky Park renovation has involved remodeling more than 117,000 square feet, creating just under 500 new workstations, along with nearly 50 new offices and 20 new conference rooms.

“Construction has been going on for 60 months straight at Sky Park, with no breaks,” said Traca Skogstad, facility manager with Property Services. “We are on schedule and expect it to be totally done in May.”
Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton recently signed a bill authorizing Xcel Energy to build and operate a combined-cycle natural gas plant at Sherco Generating Station in Becker, Minn.

“This project is of critical importance for Becker and its surrounding area,” Gov. Dayton said. "It requires an immediate certainty that the PUC review process cannot provide. It will support good jobs as Xcel Energy transitions from coal to cleaner natural gas.”

The new plant is part of the company’s Upper Midwest Resource Plan and fleet-transition efforts, as well as a key element in its efforts to power Minnesota’s energy future. The resource plan includes doubling renewable energy resources and achieving 60 percent carbon-free energy by 2030.

“The Becker natural gas plant is a key component of the Xcel Energy plan to cost-effectively transition our energy fleet to cleaner energy and more renewable resources,” said Chris Clark, president of Xcel Energy-Minnesota. “The bipartisan support this bill received is representative of the stakeholder-driven process that lets Xcel Energy maintain its commitment to central Minnesota, deliver reliable electricity for the region and invest in low-cost renewable energy for our customers.”

The legislation demonstrates the importance of providing certainty for customers and the Becker community, he said, which was facing the loss of jobs and tax base associated with the retirement of two Sherco coal units. Unit Two will be retired in 2023, with Unit One following in 2026.

Company leaders have had initial conversations with employees at Sherco, Clark said, as well as with officials from the city of Becker and Sherburne County and other stakeholders.

“This will be a long process, and one that will involve a lot of engagement with our employees, our stakeholders and our host communities,” he said. “We will be discussing and planning for how we can successfully make this transition and maintain our commitment to jobs and community investments.”

“Xcel Energy has a lot of experience transitioning its fleet to cleaner and more diverse energy sources, as we have done at our Riverside and High Bridge plants,” Clark added. “We don’t anticipate any reductions in force or layoffs and plan on accomplishing the transition through normal attrition such as retirements.”

“The legislators we worked with understood both the importance of the plant to our regional electric system and to the local community,” said Rick Evans, director of State Government Affairs, Minnesota.

Legislation is often used to provide state energy policy direction, he said. Recent examples include wind energy to meet Renewable Energy Standards, community solar gardens and the conversion of several coal plants to natural gas in the metro area over the last decade.

“When we proposed our plan to transform our energy fleet in 2015, we believed we had a plan that met the needs of our customers, our company and our community,” said Greg Chamberlain, regional vice president, Minnesota. “This bill signing demonstrates what we can achieve when we develop a solid strategy and stay on...
Gas a go at Sherco course while working closely with regulators and other stakeholders over a long period of time.”

The electric system infrastructure in the area was built for extensive transmission capacity, so strategically locating the natural gas plant in the same area takes full advantage of previous investment, ensuring reliability and cost containment, he said. The plant will be in service by 2026, coinciding with the retirement of the second Sherco coal unit. A specific project and construction schedule will be developed at a future date.

“We have an ambitious plan to power Minnesota’s energy future with cleaner, more renewable energy, while also ensuring our customers continue to receive reliable, cost-effective electricity service,” Chamberlain said. “In addition to our plans to build a new natural gas plant at Sherco, we will also add up to 1,500 megawatts of new wind energy in the next several years and several hundred megawatts of solar energy.

Throughout the process, we demonstrated that a gas plant at our Sherco site is cost-effective and absolutely necessary to ensuring reliable, affordable service for our customers as we transform our energy mix to cleaner sources,” he added. “The Sherco gas plant is integral to our plans for Minnesota’s energy future.”

The region’s electric system was built around Sherco Generating Station, Chamberlain said. The electric grid needs the new gas facility at Sherco to maintain system stability while still providing customers reliable electric service.

Because it takes several years to design and build a large power plant, this legislation helps remove potential delays in the permitting process, he added. Doing this now enables the company to ensure the plant is ready to operate when the second Sherco unit is retired in 2026.

In other Becker-related news, Xcel Energy recently reached an agreement with Northern Metals Recycling that will allow the metal recycling company to relocate its operations from north Minneapolis and build a new facility on an industrial site in Becker, bringing at least 85 jobs to the area.

The site, located near Xcel Energy’s Sherco Generating Station, will eventually serve as Northern Metal Recycling’s new recycling facility, expected to open in August 2019.

“We have a strong commitment to central Minnesota and are always working to provide solutions to our customers in our communities,” Clark said. “By helping Northern Metals Recycling relocate to Becker, they’re able to locate their new facility in an industrial zone that is ripe for additional expansion.”

The agreement and subsequent development is part of an overall economic development effort by Xcel Energy and officials in the Sherburne County area. Northern Metals expects to expand its facility in the coming years.

“Northern Metals welcomes the opportunity to construct a state-of-the-art, metals-recycling facility in Becker and looks forward to partnering with the City of Becker and Xcel Energy as we bring this project to fruition,” said Scott Helberg, chief operating officer of Northern Metals Recycling. “We look forward to building a solid long-term partnership with the Becker community.”
CFLs to LEDs

New LED promotions a sign of the times

After a long and successful run of more than two decades, compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) are succumbing to the march of progress and becoming a thing of the past.

To that end, Xcel Energy’s Home Lighting program has discontinued offering CFL discounts in Minnesota, Colorado, New Mexico and South Dakota, said Kim Sherman, product portfolio manager in Customer Solutions.

“Since the early 1990s, we have provided more than 40 million discounted CFL units to our customers,” she said. “Those millions of bulbs in turn saved about 14 terawatt-hours in energy over the life of the units. That’s enough energy to power the entire Minnesota service area for four months.”

When the program first began offering incentives for CFLs, the bulbs were quite large and didn’t always fit well into mainstream fixtures. As with any technology, improvements were made, Sherman said, and CFLs evolved into a widely accepted, low-cost and efficient lighting option.

But technology advanced and a new bulb was born. Enter the light-emitting diode bulb, or LED, era.

In 2017, Customer Solutions is focusing exclusively on offering discounts on LED bulbs, as the technology has declined in price and the bulbs are now widely available. LEDs have become the preferred option for customers in the marketplace, she said, as they perform better, last longer and are more efficient than CFLs.

The Home Lighting program kicked off the changeover in February, when it started a comprehensive promotion in Colorado, Minnesota and New Mexico. The program offers year-round discounts on LED bulbs at
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The Home Lighting program kicked off the changeover in February, when it started a comprehensive promotion in Colorado, Minnesota and New Mexico. The program offers year-round discounts on LED bulbs at participating retailers, which will be promoted at key times of the year.

“Through television, radio and digital advertising, we are working to drive customers to local retailers to purchase bulbs, starting in winter,” Sherman said. “The February kickoff aimed at getting a jumpstart on sales while the days were still short and lighting was needed for longer periods of time.”

An average household dedicates about 10 percent of its electric energy budget to lighting, and switching to energy-efficient lighting is one of the fastest ways to cut energy bills.

LEDs are a type of solid-state lighting – semiconductors that convert electricity into light. Although once known mainly for indicator and traffic lights, LEDs in general-use applications are one of today’s most energy-efficient technologies, she said. Many LEDs will last up to 25 times longer than the formerly used, standard incandescent bulbs.

LED bulbs are currently available for many applications, including as replacements for 40-watt to 100-watt traditional bulbs, along with track lights, desk lamps, kitchen under-cabinet lighting, outdoor-area lights and reflector bulbs often used in recessed fixtures.

They come in a variety of colors, and some are dimmable or offer convenient features, such as daylight and motion sensors. LEDs also work well in both indoors and outdoors because of their durability and performance in cold environments.

While LEDs are more expensive to purchase, they still save money because they last a long time and use very little energy.

And as with other electronics, prices are expected to continue to drop as more products enter the market.

Widespread use of LED lighting has the greatest potential impact on energy savings in the United States. By 2027, widespread use of LEDs could save about 348 terawatt-hours of energy, compared to no LED use, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

LED lighting is different from other lighting sources. The diodes themselves are the size of a fleck of pepper, and a mix of red, green, and blue LEDs is typically used to make white light.

In addition, LEDs emit light in a specific direction, reducing the need for reflectors and diffusers that can trap light. This feature makes LEDs more efficient for many uses, such as recessed down-lights and task lighting. With other types of lighting, the light must be reflected to a desired direction and more than half of the light may never leave the fixture.

LEDs also emit very little heat. In comparison, incandescent bulbs release 90 percent of their energy as heat and CFLs release about 80 percent of their energy as heat. The ongoing rapid development of LED technology will continue to lead to more products and improved manufacturing efficiency, which should result in lower prices.

Xcel Energy customers in Texas, New Mexico, South Dakota, Minnesota and Colorado can purchase LED bulbs at a discount during limited-time periods at participating retailers. To find information on discounts, visit xcelenergy.com/LightingDeals.
Xcel Energy works to expand security protections for energy sector

Xcel Energy recently announced it is working with Financial Services Information Sharing and Analysis Center (FS-ISAC) to create a new threat-information-sharing community. The new community will enhance the energy sector’s access to cyber and physical security intelligence.

“Ensuring the integrity of critical infrastructure demands constant vigilance and is a responsibility we take seriously,” said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. “We’re proud to take the lead in the creation of a new community that will provide additional tools to address potential cyber and physical risks to our business.”

The new electric-grid-centered intelligence community is called the Energy Analytic Security Exchange (EASE) and will be coordinated by the FS-ISAC Sector Services team on behalf of energy sector members. For 18 years, FS-ISAC has provided cyber and physical risk intelligence to the worldwide financial services industry. FS-ISAC will share its expertise, technology and access to intelligence partnerships with the new community.

“We’re excited to welcome Xcel Energy as the initial member of the Energy Analytic Security Exchange and look forward to quickly adding more members to this community,” said Cindy Donaldson, COO of FS-ISAC Sector Services. “Xcel Energy has an impressive understanding of the threats faced by the energy industry, and it is committed to protecting itself and its customers.”

Utilities have experience sharing security information within their sector. For example, the Electricity ISAC is a valuable security resource, and it is managed by the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC).

By supplementing its sharing network to include the resources of FS-ISAC Sector Services, the energy sector will have access to additional timely and relevant information, research and analysis, and threat intelligence from other industries and sources.

“We’re always working to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective energy to customers,” Fowke said. “Having additional security systems at our disposal helps to ensure the reliability of the system and protects customers.”

Online Xtra subscription available

Employee readers of Xtra can now opt out of receiving the print version of Xcel Energy’s employee and retiree publication, and instead read the online version on XpressNet or via a portal on the company’s website at xcelenergy.com.

To complete the opt-out process, employees need to fill out a form on the Xtra homepage of XpressNet, providing their name, employee ID and company email address.

Those who choose to opt out will receive an email when a new issue is available for online viewing.

The opt-out form and online versions of Xtra can be found by clicking on the “Xtra Online” link, located at the bottom of the XpressNet homepage. The online edition of Xtra also can be found at xcelenergy.com/Xtra – or from the home page, look under Community/Community Involvement/Retiree Directory.

As a reminder, Xcel Energy’s main phone number is 800.328.8226. Just hit “0” for an operator to contact various departments and employees.

Photo Op

Maple Grove Vista

Willie Harris, material handler in Material Operations, took this panoramic photo at Maple Grove Service Center in Maple Grove, Minnesota, capturing a view of off-loading three circuit breakers at the service center’s yard.

Editor’s Note: “Photo Op” is a standing feature in Xtra. Each issue, a photo submitted by a reader or produced by a member of Corporate Communications will be published. Please submit high-resolution digital photos to the editor at the email address listed on the back page of this publication. By submitting images for “Photo Op,” employees give Xtra permission to run the photos.
‘Great gratitude’ expressed for emergency assistance

Dear Xcel Energy:
Greetings and compliments. I am a 76-year-old handi-capped male – oxygen and mobility-scooter dependent. I recently suffered a severe muscle spasm in my lower extremities, which caused me to fall violently to the floor, lodged between my computer desk, scooter and lift chair.

After several minutes, I was able to knock a phone off the desk and call a friend who saw your serviceman, Calvin Garrard (lineman journeyman, Slaton, Texas), in his front yard, down the street from my home.

Calvin, like all of the Xcel Energy servicemen I have known, is a very polite, clean-cut young man. He was very careful to help me up after I assured him I had no broken bones. He and my friend stayed long enough to make sure I was OK.

Calvin gave me his business card and personal cell phone number, and assured me that I could call him any time night or day if I needed help. I was alone that day as my wife was out of town for a few hours; but she is too small to always be able to help get me up.

Once more, I want to express my great gratitude to Calvin Garrard for his help and to Xcel Energy for selecting such high quality employees.

—James (Jimmy) Sikes, Slaton, Texas

Professional and knowledgeable appliance service appreciated

Dear Xcel Energy:
Thank you to my service specialist, Colin Svidal. I have had the pleasure of working with him three times now, and his demeanor has always been the same. He is professional, knowledgeable and most of all, the best concerning communication with me the customer.

I have had your HomeSmart service for many years and will continue with it for many more years to come. They take the worry out of repairs for my appliances when repairs are needed.

—Linda Sheron, Centennial, Colo.

Monticello nuclear plant sets generation record in 2016

Xcel Energy’s Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant generated more electricity than ever before in its 45-year history. A series of equipment upgrades, including a 13 percent increase in the plant’s maximum electrical output, and operating at full power for nearly all of 2016 resulted in topping the site’s previous record.

The plant produced nearly 5.6 million megawatt-hours of net electrical output in 2016, breaking the previous record of just over 5 million megawatt-hours, set in 2006. The record-setting amount was enough power to serve more than 500,000 Upper Midwest customers.

“This is a tremendous achievement for our employees, who play a critical role in reducing our carbon footprint by keeping the plant operating safely and efficiently every day of the year,” said Pete Gardner, site vice president at Monticello. “This record highlights their hard work and commitment, and I thank them.”

Customers are also seeing the benefits of the investments in the plant. Over the course of the last decade, the plant was largely rebuilt from the inside out, he said. That included upgrading several large pumps and motors that circulate water through the plant, and installing new and larger electrical transformers that allow the plant to reliably put more power onto the grid.

Many of the components that were replaced had been installed when the plant was originally built more than 40 years ago. Now, as the unit generates more electricity, the average production cost goes down, he said, making nuclear one of the most affordable and reliable sources of electricity.

New buildings now LEED-certified

Property Services has received word that the newly renovated Faribault Service Center had been awarded LEED-certified status, meaning it complies with robust standards for environmental responsibility and energy efficiency. The facility was the second to receive that certification last fall, following the renovated St. Cloud Service Center.

Xcel Energy began following LEED design principles in 2005 with the renovation of the 414 Nicollet Mall headquarters and plaza in Minneapolis. Under the leadership of Larry Bick, senior director of Property Services, the company developed a program in 2008 to make facilities more sustainable, demonstrating its commitment to the environment and earning savings on operating expenses.

The company received its first LEED certification for the Alamosa Service Center in 2009. Since then, Property Services has evaluated new projects to determine if it makes sense to pursue LEED certification.
Sitting by the edge of a lake in northern Colorado during the summer of 2014, Justin Garner pondered an idea to help change the lives of single-parent families. He cast his fishing line in the water and thought of a way that he could impact his local community for the better.

Families in Search of Supportive Hands (FISSH) now seeks to provide fun opportunities for underprivileged children in northern Colorado and aims to help them develop a strong appreciation of natural resources. The nonprofit organization has held one event every year since its founding in 2014.

Garner, a senior gas fitter at Fort Collins Service Center, wants to give kids the opportunity to try new things and get outdoors. He has seen the trend of young generations staying indoors for hours playing video games, he said, and believes there is so much more for them to experience in their lives.

“I had a pretty rough childhood. I didn’t have much of a dad,” Garner said. “I’ve struggled my whole life, so why not give back.”

FISSH’s most recent event took place last fall, where 23 Xcel Energy employees and their families came together to create a fishing derby for 35 kids at Sheldon Lake in Fort Collins. The event was not just open to kids from single-parent homes, but to all kids and was hosted as part of Xcel Energy’s Day of Service. With perfect weather, the kids all managed to catch blue gills, sunfish, trout and even a catfish.

Garner’s wife, Danielle, along with Xcel Energy employees Jody Hutchinson, Breanna Martinez and Amanda Stanley helped make the event a success, he said. The employees volunteered their time and sent out donation letters to companies like Walmart, Coca-Cola and Chick-fil-A, asking for financial support for the event. Walmart responded by donating a $50 gift card, while Coca-Cola and Chick-fil-A each provided the food and drinks for lunch.

The families who participated loved the event and the mission of the organization, he said. A mother of one of the participants later called Garner and said how she loved the organization because of how much it impacted her son.

“We received a lot of positive feedback,” Garner said. “And the kids were actually able to take a fishing pole home.”

FISSH is now looking to create more events focused on teaching kids how to fish during the spring, summer and early fall. Currently, the organization’s events are seasonal, with fishing at Sheldon Lake.

When no events are being held, FISSH seeks to donate fishing poles to a community in need. The Boys and Girls Youth Club in Fort Collins is in contact with Garner to explore the opportunity of donating poles to kids.
Garner said he wants to help kids in whatever environment they live.

“I have a soft heart for kids in tough situations,” he said. Other organizations also have reached out to Garner regarding his program, allowing him to impact kids within their various circles of influence. For instance, he created an event for Sunshine House, a school and day care facility, where he took the kids out fishing for a day. At least 60 to 70 percent of the kids who attend the school are underprivileged.

FISSH currently handles all registrations for events through its email at FISSHC0@USA.com. It also receives feedback from families who participated in events at that email.

Garner and his wife live in the Fort Collins area with their two pre-school children. Garner said he wants to give his kids the same experiences that he is offering other kids through FISSH. His son caught his first fish at the age of two.

Outside of his daily duties at work, Garner loves to spend time outdoors. Not surprisingly, fishing is one of his favorite pastimes.

“That’s when I feel most peaceful,” Garner said.

And in years to come, more and more children from single-family homes may say those same words, thanks to Garner and his nonprofit.

“FISSH was created knowing that not every kid has the same opportunities,” he added. “We are hoping to have a positive effect, one cast at a time.”

FISSH Nonprofit
Justin Garner’s Families in Search of Supportive Hands (FISSH) seeks to provide fun opportunities for underprivileged children in northern Colorado, aiming to help them develop a strong appreciation of natural resources.
Friends
We’ll Miss

Duane M. Alberts, 82, scheduling administrator, Administration, Black Dog Plant, Burnsville, Minn., died on Dec. 31, 2016. He worked for NSP from 1953 to 1972.


Jack Cook, 80, district troubleman, Southern Overhead, Minnesota, died on Jan. 27, 2017. He worked for NSP-W from 1964 to 1995.

Donald Dennis, 90, journeyman electrician, Overhead, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Jan. 24, 2017. He worked for NSP from 1949 to 1984.

Clarence C. Denton, 89, administrative supervisor, Administration, Lubbock, Texas, died on Dec. 13, 2016. He worked for SPS from 1952 to 1988.


Myron W. Ekern, 90, staff assistant, Accounting Reports, La Crosse, Wis., died on Jan. 27, 2017. He worked for NSP from 1950 to 1993.


Georgia Fox, 98, switch board operator, Systems, Amarillo, Texas, died on Jan. 4, 2017. She worked for SPS from 1968 to 1983.

Robert Fuller, 90, telephone mechanic, Minot, N.D., died on Jan. 18, 2017. He worked for NSP from 1953 to 1974.


Jeffrey D. Levy, 57, trainee, Gas System Control, Lookout Center, Golden, Colo., died on Jan. 20, 2017. He worked for PSCo from 2013 until the time of his death.


Eugene Olson, 86, field clerk, Relay Department, Metro East, Minnesota, died on Dec. 23, 2016. He worked for NSP from 1951 to 1991.


Raymond Steuerwald, 97, district manager, Haawahawa Division, Red Wing Service Center, Red Wing, Minn., died on Jan. 10, 2017. He worked for NSP from 1948 to 1965.


Retiring

John Baker, plant supervisor, Cunningham/Maddox Station, Hobbs, N.M., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Omari S. Banks, lead fitter, Gas Construction, Denver, Colo., retired on April 1, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 29 years.

Warren Banks, senior plant process computer systems analyst, Engineering, Comanche Station, Pueblo, Colo., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Henry G. Byar, Jr., journeyman lineman/foreman, Evergreen Service Center, Evergreen, Colo., retired on Feb. 24, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 24 years.

Jim Beeler, lead station electrician, Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, Welch, Minn., retired on Feb. 17, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 28 years.
Anthony Begeman, fleet technician, Fleet Services, La Crosse, Wis., retired on Jan. 31, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 24 years.

Laurel Boerger (litbb2046@gmail.com), manager, Community Affairs, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Feb. 3, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 29 years.


Robert C. Burnett, field representative, Credit, St. Cloud Service Center, St. Cloud, Minn., retired on March 1, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Angel Castro (electricangel73@yahoo.com), electric meterman, Meter Department NESC, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Feb. 10, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Jim Chapman, line crew foreman, Operations, St. Croix Falls Line Shop, St. Croix Falls, Wis., retired on Feb. 24, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Kenneth Chism (kenchism27@gmail.com), working foreman, Thermal Energy, Denver Steam Plant, Denver, Colo., retired on Feb. 27, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Becky B. Danberg (bdanberg@hotmail.com), operations specialist, Energy Supply, Allen S. King Plant, Bayport, Minn., retired on Feb. 3, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Mike Dasilva (dasilva290@aol.com), overhead line foreman, Electric Line Construction, Arvada Service Center, Arvada, Colo., retired on Jan. 31, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Rudy Davis (rude.dog.davis@gmail.com), plant electrician specialist, Maintenance, Cherokee Station, Denver, Colo., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.


Lynn A. Drehr, working foreman, Gas Shop, Valentina Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on March 31, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Marc Evenson, manager/bargaining activities, Business Systems, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 42 years.

Bernie Ferguson, superintendent, Substation Construction, Henderson, Colo., retired on Aug. 31, 2016. She worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

John J. Fitzgerald Jr. (fitzmarine11@comcast.net), senior technician specialist, System Protection, Table Mountain, Golden, Colo., retired on March 31, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Janet Franz (jcallahilly@gmail.com), design technician, Design Department, Arvada Headquarters, Arvada, Colo., retired on Jan. 31, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 28 years.

Lance Hackey (lhackey2@charter.net), plant equipment operator, Operations, Sherco Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on April 22, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Daniel Harlan (har47man@aol.com), lead mechanic, Fleet, Kipling Service Center, LakeWOOD, Colo., retired on March 31, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 40 years.

Jim Harlander (jimharlander@charter.net), lead plant equipment operator, Operations, Sherco Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on March 9, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.

Michael J. Hilpisch (hilps06@hotmail.com), technician, Electric Meter, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 40 years.

Richard R. Hohn (dhoehn@msn.com), general foreman, Electric Overhead Construction, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

David Kampa, lead repairman/welder, Maintenance, Sherco Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on Feb. 28, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Paul Lauldl, crew lead, Gas Tech, La Crosse Service Center, La Crosse, Wis., retired on Jan. 20, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

William Lindblom (billlindblom@gmail.com), linemen/troubleman, Electric Trouble, Lindsay Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on March 1, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.


Roger Peters, mechanic/journeyman, Harrington Station, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Feb. 3, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Jan Price (jonchrisprice@msn.com), designer, Design, Mesa County Operations Center, Grand Junction, Colo., retired on Feb. 15, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Thomas Roberts (lbmbrts7@gmail.com), operator, Production, Valmont Station, Boulder, Colo., retired on March 5, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Mark D. Schultz, Damage Prevention, Minot, N.D., retired on Jan. 31, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 43 years.

David Sedgeman (davidsedge-man.55@gmail.com), facility analyst, Energy Supply Finance, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Jan. 3, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Terri M. Shaw (terrijsost@qsl.com), technician thereafter, Design, Summit Operations, Silverthorne, Colo., retired on Jan. 9, 2017. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

Ellen Shenefelt, customer service representative, Business Solution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Feb. 10, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 27 years.

Jody Stebe (jpask@comcast.net), C&I billing analyst, Billing Operations North, Centre Pointe, Roseville, Minn., retired on March 3, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Luann Vigil (lwigil77@charter.net), technician, Design, Mesa County Operations Center, Grand Junction, Colo., retired on March 31, 2017. She worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.
If you're planning to dig on your property, make sure to call 8-1-1 at least 2 business days before you get started! Electrical or natural gas lines could be buried just below the surface, and damaging them can be dangerous, and even deadly. A professional will stop by to mark the area for you. Whether it's a major project or just some gardening, be sure to call 8-1-1 first. It’s smart. It’s easy. It’s safe. And it’s one of the ways we’re always delivering, safely. For more information visit xcelenergy.com/Safety.

**ALWAYS delivering.**