New sites help train employees in responding to gas emergencies
FSV Flexibility
An effort at Fort St. Vrain will help optimize operations for years to come.

Pollinator Habitat
More and more acres of land near company facilities are benefiting all-important pollinators.

Pueblo as Host
The Colorado city of Pueblo recently hosted Xcel Energy’s annual meeting, along with community visits by company leaders.

Training Villages
A pair of new facilities can create real-life conditions for emergency-response and leak-detection training.

Corporate Responsibility
This year’s report discusses the path the company is on to achieve its carbon vision.

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

On the Cover
At a grand opening event at the new gas-training facility in Hugo, Minn., company crews worked with members of the Hugo Fire Department to practice responding to various gas emergencies. Pictured here is Ben Kiser, with Gas Emergency Response out of the Newport Service Center in Minnesota. For more information, please see page eight.
In December, we announced our industry-leading vision to produce 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2050. Now, we have submitted a key plan to deliver on that vision, and along the journey achieve our interim target of reducing carbon emissions 80 percent (from 2005 levels) by 2030.

On July 1, we filed the Upper Midwest Energy Plan that details our proposed energy supply mix through 2034. During the next 18 months, we will have ongoing dialogue with our state commissions to ensure our roadmap works for the company and all of our key stakeholders. Achieving this vision will require some compromises and a spirit of cooperation.

While we are making these historic changes to our systems, it’s important to remember that reliability and affordability must serve as guideposts to any plan that we propose. If we can’t reduce carbon affordably, the clean energy transition will slow down. If we can’t provide reliable service, the clean energy transition will come to a screeching halt.

To provide a cleaner product and meet these promises of reliability and affordability for our customers, we plan to retire all of our coal units in the Upper Midwest by 2030, a decade ahead of schedule. To ensure we have enough carbon-free, always-on power, we propose a 10-year extension to the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant – from 2030 to 2040 – to give us the maximum flexibility to adapt as new technologies emerge.

Meanwhile, we will continue to expand our renewable portfolio. We expect to add 3 to 4 gigawatts of solar and will continue our leadership in wind energy. By 2030, about half of our energy in the region will come from renewable sources.

As well, we are committed to innovation, and new technologies will play a key role as we approach 2050. Our plan looks forward 15 years, and new technologies not yet economically viable may emerge over this timeframe. For example, as battery-storage technologies become more cost effective, they will be part of our future portfolio.

We will also use natural gas to help ensure reliability as we add more renewables. Natural gas is a reliable source of electricity that is cleaner than coal and that can support the system during extreme weather conditions or when wind and solar energy may not be available. This plan includes our acquisition of the Mankato Energy Center and building a natural gas plant at Sherco.

And finally, we will expand our energy efficiency programs and work with customers on new ways to reduce peak demand on our system. The easiest way to reduce carbon is to never produce it in the first place.

We’re committed to our employees and our communities as we make this transition. As we have managed the early retirement of coal plants in the past, we have done so without layoffs and we plan to use the same approach here. We are partnering with labor leadership to develop a transition plan that takes advantage of natural attrition and includes retraining opportunities for everyone who wants an ongoing role with the company.

We’ve promised to redouble our economic development efforts to help communities that host the affected plants. A great example is in Becker where we have worked very hard to attract significant businesses, including Google and Northern Metals Recycling, to build on our Sherco property.

I am so proud of the outstanding work being done at our company, and it is thanks to that success that Xcel Energy is uniquely positioned to drive the clean energy transition. As the plan moves forward for consideration with the PUC, we will continue to engage a range of stakeholders. I’m confident that we have an effective plan to get it done that enhances reliability and ensures affordability.
A half-price offer is usually hard to beat. Not to mention a two-for-one deal.

The recent purchase of a new General Electric gas-fired, combustion turbine at a deeply discounted price was too good of an opportunity for Xcel Energy to pass up. And the new turbine will end up benefitting two existing units at Fort St. Vrain Generating Station in the coming years.

It is rare for the company to make such a large purchase on short notice, said Katie Honey, senior engineer at the plant, as a purchase of this size is usually included in a five-year budget cycle.

However, the new turbine will save the company and its customers money, she said, as well as optimize the operation of Fort St. Vrain for years to come.

The combined-cycle units at the Colorado plant are some of the oldest in the company’s fleet of GE turbines. The turbines now have more than 425,000 total fired operating hours, she said, and are approaching their end-of-life dates.

So when GE offered Xcel Energy a new combustion turbine at roughly half the original price, the company quickly decided to move on it.

In addition, under a unique proposal, Xcel Energy is not simply replacing one of the existing turbines with another, but is rather using the new turbine to refurbish two different turbines at the plant. The idea recently was honored with one of the company’s ‘I Deliver’ awards.

“What the new turbine allows us to do is to use parts from it, as well as download the new generation’s technology onto our existing turbines,” said Patrick Wilson, principle asset analyst with Energy Supply. “We are taking turbine parts from a newer model with an improved design and using them on older units.”

The new rotor, control system and other major parts from the recently purchased turbine will be removed and installed into the plant’s Unit Four next year. And the rotor removed from Unit Four will then be refurbished and installed into Unit Two in 2022.

In addition, the other major components of the new turbine will be installed into Unit Two in 2022 to address end-of-life concerns and completely refurbish that unit.

Making Xcel Energy natural gas-fired plants more efficient and cutting costs for customers is the focus of a new Combined Cycle Flexibility Initiative at the company. The effort looks to upgrade combustion-turbine units in Colorado and Minnesota, creating longer outage intervals, larger operating ranges, reduced emissions, and faster startup and ramping capabilities.

In the coming years, upgrades and improvements will be undertaken at a number of Xcel Energy plants, but the Fort St.
Vrain marks the first. Other plants will include Riverside, Cherokee, Blue Spruce and Rocky Mountain.

The new Flexibility Initiative also will help Xcel Energy as it adds a significant amount of renewable-energy generation to its system – all part of the company’s goal to cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2030, and be carbon-free by 2050.

“In doing this, we will make Fort St. Vrain and other plants even more flexible, so they can better react as our generation portfolio shifts with the up-and-down nature of wind and solar power,” Honey said. “We can take our older natural gas plants and make them more modern, so they are better able to chase the moving generation ramps of renewables.”

In addition to making Fort St. Vrain a more efficient and flexible plant, the purchase of the new turbine will provide an overall savings to the company of $15 million.

“When we’re installing new parts and downloading new technology, we’re also extending the maintenance intervals of these units,” Wilson said. “And these new parts are more fuel efficient, so we also have a fuel savings associated with the project.”

Fort St. Vrain currently can produce more than 1,000 megawatts of power, if needed, through a combination of three gas-fired combustion turbines, three heat-recovery steam generators (HRSGs), and two other stand-alone turbines.

The HRSGs use exhaust heat from the combustion turbines to create steam that spins the original 330-megawatt turbine-generator used in nuclear operations. Exhaust gas from the jet-engine-like combustion turbines, which would otherwise be vented into the atmosphere, is instead captured and channeled into the new HRSG boilers at roughly 1,100 degrees. The heated gas passes through a series of passages resembling a car radiator to create steam, which is then shipped next door to spin the old turbine.

Fort St. Vrain, located about 45 miles north of Denver, operated as a nuclear facility until 1989. It then became the site of the world’s first large-scale decommissioning of a commercial reactor. The company retained significant assets from the plant’s nuclear era to reuse in the repowering effort.

Two-for-One
Under a unique, award-winning proposal, Xcel Energy is not simply replacing one existing combustion turbine with another, but is rather using a new turbine to refurbish two different units at Colorado’s Fort St. Vrain Generating Station. At left and above, work is completed on another turbine project at the plant.
Xcel Energy is managing a large swath of land under and near its facilities to benefit bees, butterflies and, frankly, everyone.

The company has now planted more than 2,100 acres of pollinator habitat at more than 40 sites—primarily in Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota at this point—with more to come.

Restoring lands that benefit pollinators and increase prairie habitat is an effort aimed at saving the bees and butterflies that help pollinate a large amount of the food we eat. Upwards of 75 percent of food crops rely on pollinators to survive.

The company’s Pollinator Initiative identifies opportunities to plant milkweed and other native plants on Xcel Energy-owned property, said Pam Rasmussen, senior manager in Siting and Land Rights.

The sites include land near a natural gas line, seven power lines, 10 power plants and other locations. Employee groups in Colorado and Texas are also now in the early stages of joining the initiative.

Although the company has been working to support pollinator habitat for more than 30 years, its Pollinator Initiative took off about five years ago when extinction threatened monarch butterflies and honeybees native to the Midwest, she said.

In 2015, three important events occurred to spur the effort. U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar hosted a Monarch Conservation Celebration event with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Substation Construction recommended native plant landscaping at a new substation; and the company signed on to the St. Croix Valley Partnership to increase pollinator habitat.

This pollinator pledge committed the company to converting at least 50 acres in the St. Croix River Valley to pollinator-friendly habitat. The pledge is an initiative launched by the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

“It was kind of the perfect storm—in a good way—with more of a focus being put on pollinator partnerships and identifying ways to manage our land,” Rasmussen said. “The employees working at the substation suggested looking at making the land around it pollinator habitat, rather than having to mow and plant trees. It was a great idea that we then began replicating at other sites.”

Xcel Energy’s Pollinator team was then assembled with interested employees from various business areas. The team also decided to seek and strengthen partnerships and educational opportunities for the effort, as well as support and initiate projects.

The team partnered with businesses, communities, nonprofits and government agencies, she said, and the overall initiative focused on choosing sites with high probabilities of success. The Midwestern species targeted are the monarch

**Pollinator Habitat**

More than 2,100 acres now planted at more than 40 company sites
butterfly, the rusty patched bumblebee and the Karner blue butterfly.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided the company with its expertise on determining the proper seed mix, providing seed drills for planting and sharing in the cost of the seed. A variety of seeds are in the mix, including 10 grasses and 20 different wildflowers.

In the last five years, the Pollinator Initiative expanded from four to 44 projects. There have been many education and outreach events for children and communities to join in.

“We have been able to involve children on many of our projects,” Rasmussen said. “We invite the kids to come and give them actual plants to plant into the ground instead of seeds.

“This way, the kids can get dirty and feel more involved,” she added. “These activities show the children firsthand how volunteering can help, and how easy it is to integrate pollination into their lives.”

Last year, Xcel Energy, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Burnsville community helped plant milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants on land near a city park and company transmission lines near Minnesota’s Black Dog Generating Station.

Also, during National Pollinator Week last year, Xcel Energy employees, staff from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and children from a summer program helped plant two acres of property near Xcel Energy’s Wisconsin headquarters in Eau Claire.

This year, nearly 200 employees attended a Lunch and Learn session in Minneapolis, where Rasmussen was joined by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service urban biologist.

“My favorite part is the positive feedback we receive, all of the interest we have in the program, and the unique ideas that develop from working with individuals passionate about this cause,” Rasmussen said. “It can be a slow process, taking place over a long period of time.

“This isn’t something you do once and everything is perfect,” she added. “You have to have patience, but we are really starting to see the fruits of our labor out in the field – and that is definitely gratifying.”

Community Events
Under the Pollinator Initiative, a number of projects have also included education and outreach events for employees, families and communities to join in (left). On page six, land under a transmission line in Bloomington, Minn., now flourishes with pollinator-friendly plants, while above, saving the monarch butterfly is a key part of the effort.
Xcel Energy recently announced a new set of voice actions for the Google Assistant, including the option for customers to pay their bill by simply starting by saying, “OK Google…”

Customers can now access their account, hear their account balance or due date, and even make a bill payment, simply by speaking to their Google Assistant-enabled devices.

The Assistant is available on more than a billion devices, including Google Nest Hub, Google Home, Google Home Mini, or through the Google Assistant app on iPhone or natively on Android devices.

Once their Xcel Energy and Assistant accounts are linked, a customer simply needs to say, “OK Google, pay my energy bill,” to hear account information and make a payment.

“Today’s announcement builds on our collaboration with Google and the ways we’re working to bring enhanced service and next-generation engagement to our customers,” said Brett Carter, executive vice president and chief customer and innovation officer. “This is an exciting time to develop and deploy innovative energy solutions for our customers while leveraging our investments in technology.”

Xcel Energy launched its first set of Actions for the Assistant last year, allowing customers to access information about improving energy efficiency in their homes. In the future, even more options will be available to Xcel Energy customers through Nest Hub and the Assistant, products that will give customers the ability to personalize their energy management using voice-connected devices, such as the Google Nest Learning Thermostat.

Xcel Energy has been a leader in providing smart-home technologies that help customers manage their energy. The company and Google Nest began working together in 2015 with the energy savings program, Seasonal Savings, which slowly fine-tunes temperatures in a customer’s home heating and cooling schedule to help them save energy and lower bills without sacrificing personal preferences or comfort.

With smart-thermostat, energy-efficiency rebates available in Texas and Colorado, Xcel Energy is scaling efforts to deploy smart thermostats for home energy management. And now, with Xcel Energy’s Google Assistant Actions, that effort is being expanded to provide an easier way for customers to access their account and use energy more efficiently.

‘Power for the Plains’ transmission effort continuing

As part of Xcel Energy’s plan to deliver reliable and cost-effective energy to Texas and New Mexico communities, construction is now complete on more than 225 miles of new transmission line in southeast New Mexico and the southern Texas Panhandle.

The new projects — part of the company’s overall Power for the Plains effort in the region — represent nearly $240 million in investment and strengthen opportunities for local communities and businesses.

Another 225 miles of transmission line are currently under construction in the area, totaling more than $300 million in investment. The largest project being built — the TUCO-Yoakum-Hobbs 345-kilovolt line — is expected to be complete in 2020.

As part of Power for the Plains effort, Xcel Energy has invested in more than 800 miles of new transmission lines since 2011 in New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. More than 700 additional miles of transmission line will be constructed through 2021. The transmission expansion represents more than $3 billion in investment.

Online Xtra subscription available for employees and retirees

Employee readers of Xtra can 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.

In addition, retirees can opt out of receiving the print version, or request address changes regarding home delivery of the print edition, by calling the Human Resources Service Center at 800.689.7682. They also are invited to visit the webpage noted above (or xcelenergy.com/Retirees) to view the latest issue, as well as a number of back issues of Xtra.
PUEBLO PRIDE
Colorado city hosts Annual Shareholders Meeting

Pueblo made for a fitting backdrop for Xcel Energy’s recent Annual Shareholders Meeting. Located in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, Pueblo is a community where the clean energy transition is well underway.

The Colorado city is home to a Vestas manufacturing plant that makes the towers for a number of the company’s wind farms. It’s also host to the Comanche Solar Facility – one of the largest solar farms east of the Rockies. That farm, with more than 450,000 panels, is adjacent to Comanche Generating Station, a coal plant that has served Colorado for decades.

Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, focused many of his comments during his annual meeting speech on how Xcel Energy is leading the clean energy transition and the company’s vision to produce carbon-free electricity by 2050.

“I believe this bold vision is achievable,” Fowke said during his speech at the Pueblo Convention Center. “Over the last 15 years, we’ve demonstrated the ability to move from fossil fuels to clean energy sources, while keeping prices affordable and service reliable. That’s important because those are the outcomes our customers and communities want.”

During the meeting, Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar proclaimed May 15 as Xcel Energy Day in Pueblo. Although the company only provides natural gas service to the community, Xcel Energy also produces electricity for EVRAZ Rocky Mountain Steel, one of the largest employers in Pueblo.

Fowke and a group of Xcel Energy leaders toured EVRAZ the day prior to the meeting, where a large solar array is scheduled to be built onsite. Xcel Energy and EVRAZ negotiated a long-term pricing agreement to keep EVRAZ in Pueblo and prepare for future expansion, as well.

In addition, Fowke and Alice Jackson, president of Xcel Energy–Colorado, presented a $50,000 grant to Pueblo Community College to fund a faculty position for a new solar lab being developed. This grant aligns with the company’s efforts to support the next generation of workers. The Pueblo City County Library District also received a $20,000 grant to fund a traveling exhibit that documents how energy helped drive industry in Pueblo.

Pueblo has some of the best solar resources in the country, and two solar-to-battery projects authorized as part of the Colorado Energy Plan will be built in Pueblo County. The county also recently signed an agreement to participate in the company’s Partners in Energy program to help meet its renewable energy goals.

“It was a wonderful three days in Pueblo,” said Ashley Valdez, area manager with Community and Local Government Affairs. “It was an honor to showcase our community, our downtown river walk and all the economic development underway.

“Pueblo was proud to host our annual meeting, and feedback from community leaders has been wonderful,” she added. “They appreciate that Xcel Energy cares about its communities.”

Ben Fowke leads the Annual Meeting.

The Pueblo Riverwalk
Even with a natural gas system as large as Xcel Energy’s, an average of 150 gas emergency calls to deal with – every day – seems like a lot.

And with public safety an always-crucial priority for the company, effectively dealing with those calls by Gas Emergency Response crews is a necessity for customers across the service territory.

Enter the new Gas Response Training Villages. With one in Minnesota and another in Colorado, the facilities are modeled “streetscapes” of single-family and multi-unit premises, which can create real-life conditions for emergency-response and leak-detection training, said Kevin Joyce, director of Gas Emergency Response and Dispatch.

“We know there will be issues with a large system like ours, so we need to prepare our employees to respond appropriately when needed,” he said. “And with public safety as one of our core values, training employees under one standard program is a commitment to that ongoing effort.”

To the numbers, then, Xcel Energy’s gas system entails nearly 38,000 miles of pipeline and two million customers in five states. More than 1,000 journeymen and apprentices help manage that system. And due to retirements, gas apprentice
Numbers have recently increased by nearly 90 percent — from 97 in 2018 to more than 170 in 2019.

The villages provide live gas-leak emergency simulations with either compressed air or actual natural gas, all in a safe and controlled environment to help hone employee skills and abilities. That training includes line locating, leak survey, leak pinpointing and relighting skills, Joyce said, as well as large-scale emergency drills with local first responders to practice joint responses to gas emergencies.

The training centers are a culmination of a lot of work, including benchmarking with other industry members and researching best practices, he said. Xcel Energy’s training villages are now a pair of just a dozen or so such facilities in the nation. The project began in 2016 as a joint effort between Gas Emergency Response and Technical Training.

“The villages look like a neighborhood and allow us to run everything from a full-scale mock drill to a leak survey for a single employee responder,” he said. “And each village can simulate more than 40 different leak scenarios — everything from pipeline dig-ins, damaged meter sets, indoor and outdoor leaks, and even underground leaks with simulated gas migration.”
“We can now simulate what we see out in the field every day,” he added. “We’re as close to real life as we can be, and we have the ability to get our employees through a level of training that they have not had before.”

The village in Hugo, Minn., opened last fall and is patterned after a similar facility owned by Southwest Gas Co. in Nevada, said Jason Quackenbush, supervisor of Technical Training. Multiple instructors, including one always on the village’s valve system to control flows, lead trainees through the 41 possible leak scenarios.

Those include blowing gas in a burn pit, a lightning strike on a meter and leaks migrating underground in drainage systems. Handheld units are used to produce simulated leaks and control readings that will be picked up by leak detectors that think there is an actual leak, he said.

The Colorado facility in the Denver-metro area recently held a tour for Mosaic, a workforce solutions firm for the utility and oil and gas industries, and will host a regional group of first responders next month, said Chris Holden, supervisor of Technical Training.

Holden also recently gave a presentation on the training villages at an American Gas Association best-practices conference. “It’s a unique facility,” he said. “It’s especially helpful for refresher training on tasks and issues that don’t happen very often, but that our employees need to be ready to deal with on any given day.”

Tom Anderson, senior operations manager with Gas Emergency Response, has already been involved in a number of trainings with area fire departments in Minnesota. This spring, four exercises were held with more than 50 firefighters, along with numerous Gas employees.

“Right now, gas emergencies where we can practice responding, evacuating and coordinating to resolve an issue,” he said. “And we’re fortunate to have access to real-life blowing gas or compressed air in these scenarios, with employees there to work with first responders as they would out in the field.

“It’s been great working in partnership with Technical Training,” he added. “They have done a great job of setting up the villages for high-quality training.”

Feedback from the fire departments has been positive, Anderson said, and the villages provide a great relationship-building tool.

“We can work side by side, bridge gaps and create strong relationships,” he said. “Everyone learns the standard operating procedures of each group for a better understanding in working together.”

More communities and first-responder groups are now asking for training, he said, and the company benefits from supporting their participation to help keep the public safe.

“When responding to gas emergencies, our customers expect competent and trained professionals to address the issue at hand and keep them safe,” Joyce said. “And these villages certainly help reinforce our commitment to public safety.”
Xcel Energy recently unveiled its annual Corporate Responsibility Report, showing how the company is meeting its environmental, economic and community commitments. The report includes the news that it has reduced carbon emissions by 38 percent from 2005 levels — well ahead of industry reductions.

While it aims to deliver 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2050, the company is currently on pace to reach its interim goal to cut carbon 80 percent by 2030, as it maintains reliable and affordable energy for customers — a key component of the goal.

“Our customers and communities are at the center of all we do, especially our industry-leading plans to deliver carbon-free electricity by 2050,” said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. “We’re realizing significant progress in the clean energy transition and empowering those who want to save energy and purchase 100 percent renewable electricity. All of our customers benefit from our strategies that both dramatically reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills.”

Xcel Energy’s clean energy leadership includes a groundbreaking proposal to end all coal use in the Upper Midwest in 2030, to have renewable sources power more than half its grid in Colorado by 2026, and to vastly expand the use of wind energy in Texas and New Mexico.

Maintaining nuclear generation and encouraging customer energy efficiency and participation in voluntary renewable choice programs are critical for the company to reach its carbon reduction goals. The company expects to achieve its 2030 goal using existing technologies and is advocating for research and development to advance carbon-free technologies that are required to reach its “Destination 2050” while protecting customer reliability and affordability.

Renewable energy sources produced 25 percent of the company’s electricity in 2018. With its 38 percent reduction in carbon emissions from the electricity serving its customers, the company is also well ahead of the industry average of 27 percent.

Xcel Energy also provides voluntary options for customers who want to reduce energy use and go beyond renewables in the company’s standard energy mix. Some recent facts include:

• Nearly 190,000 Xcel Energy customers participated in renewable choice programs.
• Customers completed about 4.8 million energy-saving projects through more than 150 efficiency programs and rebate options.
• Customers saved 1,240 gigawatt hours of electricity, enough to power 160,000 average homes.
Customers also saved 1.6 million dekatherms of natural gas, enough to fuel 20,000 average homes.

Xcel Energy and its customers avoided more than 1.5 million tons of carbon emissions, equivalent to taking approximately 290,000 cars off the road for a year.

Xcel Energy’s annual Corporate Responsibility Report offers customers, communities, investors and other stakeholders an inside look at the company’s progress on a number of economic, environmental and social efforts. Other highlights detailed in the report include:

- Beyond carbon reduction – By delivering cleaner energy, the company is reducing other environmental impacts. It reduced water consumption 20 percent from all electricity generation and air emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide by at least 77 percent.
- Record renewable generation – In both Colorado and the Upper Midwest, there were hours where renewables delivered more than 70 percent of Xcel Energy customers’ electricity, and entire days where customers received more than 60 percent renewable energy.
- Community commitment – The investment of $63 million in 2018, which includes support for energy assistance, volunteer programs and grants through the Xcel Energy Foundation. These grants support nonprofit organizations focused on STEM education, environmental stewardship, economic sustainability, and arts and culture. For communities where the company is closing coal plants, it is partnering on economic development opportunities to successfully make this transition.
- Workforce for the future – To build the energy future, Xcel Energy is working to attract, retain and develop the highest quality talent through its workforce programs. In 2018, 56 percent of newly hired employees were local, 24 percent had ethnically diverse backgrounds and 10 percent were veterans. The company has also reduced workplace injuries 55 percent since 2009.
- Strong corporate governance – The Xcel Energy Board of Directors has an independent lead director, along with 12 of 13 independent board members, including five that self-identify as female and/or minority to provide the diverse perspectives and experience the company needs to be successful.

The online version of the report can be found on the company’s website and also includes a “Library of Briefs,” which covers 20 topics from corporate citizenship to renewable energy to water management. Each brief has a PDF that can be downloaded and printed or shared separate from the report.
Ribbon cutting held for second Wisconsin Solar*Connect Community solar garden

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind and other local legislators joined Xcel Energy leaders and Solar*Connect Community subscribers recently to celebrate the completion of the program’s second solar garden at a ribbon cutting near Cashton, Wis.

“This is another exciting day for Xcel Energy and the founding members of our Solar*Connect Community program,” said Mark Stoering, president, Xcel Energy–Wisconsin and Michigan. “This project completes the second phase of a program that allows subscribers to benefit from another source of renewable energy in our service territory.”

The first of three one-megawatt community solar gardens went online in October 2017 in Eau Claire. Construction on the Cashton solar garden was completed earlier this year, and the facility is now also generating clean, renewable energy for its subscribers.

“I am proud to see Xcel Energy take steps to address our nation’s changing climate and invest in carbon-free technology,” Kind said. “In order to make a smooth transition to clean energy, we must encourage partnerships that will address Wisconsin’s unique energy needs and make our communities stronger.”

Xcel Energy is also moving forward with a third and final garden in Ashland, Wis., which will be online later this year. To subscribe, customers pay a one-time fee to the program and in turn receive a credit on their monthly electric bill, based on the solar energy production of all the gardens in the program.

With Solar*Connect Community almost fully subscribed, Xcel Energy recently launched a new renewable energy program for Wisconsin customers, called Renewable*Connect. Renewable*Connect allows customers to subscribe to the benefits of wind and solar energy with the flexibility to choose how much and for how long.

Customers who subscribe to Solar*Connect Community or Renewable*Connect can secure up to 100 percent of their electricity from renewable resources.

News Brief

Texas Sunrise

Bryant Coon, a senior agent with Siting and Land Rights in Amarillo, caught this stunning sunrise behind the company’s W77 transmission line, a 115-kilovolt line running near Canyon, Texas.

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.
Xcel Energy again named a top military veteran employer

Xcel Energy has been named to the 2019 Military Times Best for Vets Employers rankings – the sixth straight year the company has received this honor.

“We appreciate the sacrifice that our veterans and their families have made to ensure the safety and security of our nation, and it’s an honor to have these men and women in our workforce,” said Ben Fowke, chairman, president, CEO. “Our veterans bring leadership, teamwork and experience to the job, and their dedication and passion for service deliver value for our customers every day.”

Xcel Energy set a goal in 2013 to have 10 percent of new hires be veterans, and the company has reached that goal every year. Xcel Energy currently employs more than 1,000 veterans, nearly 10 percent of its workforce.

Xcel Energy’s commitment to veterans extends beyond hiring them. Once on the job, an employee resource group helps veterans succeed by providing mentors and networking resources. Xcel Energy’s network of support services for veterans and active military is part of its long-standing commitment for diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In addition to its programs for hiring and retention, Xcel Energy does business with more than 140 veteran entrepreneurs and provides outreach to veterans groups in the communities it serves.

An unprecedented 200 companies submitted complete responses to the rigorous 91-question survey that is used to decide the Best for Vets Employers ranking. A total of 132 employers made the list, of which 113 were for-profit companies and 19 were government and nonprofit organizations.

In their 10th year, the Best for Vets Employers rankings evaluate companies’ culture, veteran recruiting, veteran policies, and accommodations for members of the National Guard and reserves.

Military Times invites organizations from across the country to fill out its survey, tests to ensure the accuracy of responses, evaluates survey data and includes only the best companies in its published rankings. The standards are objective, rigorous and editorially independent. As a result, transitioning service members recognize them as the most trusted veteran job rankings and have come to rely on Best for Vets Employers to aid their transition to civilian life.

Letters

‘Appreciate how comfortable you make my life’

Dear Xcel Energy:

I was so grateful during the storm for my warm house and hot grilled cheese sandwich, made possible by Xcel Energy. I want to thank everyone at your company. I don’t take you for granted, and I do appreciate how comfortable you make my life.

—Colorado customer

‘I hope no one got hurt and all is well’

Dear Xcel Energy:

Our power was affected due to the blizzard. The weather was so bad for 24 to 48 hours. Well, I just wanted to say thank you to everyone there who got the system up and running in a very above-average timeframe in my opinion. Great job! I hope no one got hurt and all is well.

—Colorado customer

‘We greatly appreciated all you do’

Dear Xcel Energy:

I want to personally thank those of you who were out fixing lines. We greatly appreciated all you do in helping to keep our children warm and safe in our home.

Please pass this on. We so appreciate all that everyone does at your company.

—South Dakota customer

‘The most efficient, professional and responsive customer team’

The Data Request Team is a most efficient, professional and responsive customer team at your company! As a developer, we rely on prompt accurate information, and the team consistently provides us with superior customer service. Kudos to all. (Editor’s note: Team members include MJ Doerr, Wendy Webb, Cale Pieczynski and Shawn Queenan.)

—Commercial customer
Sherral Bell, 66, administrative assistant II, SPS Tower, Amarillo, Texas, died on April 1, 2019. She worked for PSCo from 1963 to 1993.


Arland Brusven, 87, vice president, Finance and Treasurer, Officers and Officers Staff, 414 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minn., died on March 24, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1962 to 1995.

Robert Davidson, Jr., 89, Texas, died on April 12, 2019. He worked for SPS from 1955 to 1993.

Patricia DeAngelis, 61, senior designer, Westgas Billing, Prudential Plaza, Denver, Colo., died on April 1, 2019. She worked for PSCo from 1965 to 1993.

Garold Coulthurst, 84, division services manager, Wisconsin, died on April 6, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1962 to 1995.

Sherral Bell, 66, administrative assistant II, SPS Tower, Amarillo, Texas, died on March 26, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 1951 to 1991.


Gerald Horsemeyer, 80, power generation general manager, Commodity Services, SPS Tower, Amarillo, Texas, died on March 29, 2019. He worked for SPS from 1986 to 2001.


Harvey Jantzen, 86, transportation supervisor, Colorado, died on April 13, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 1956 to 1987.


Gary Kosch, 72, senior designer, Substations, Engineering Design, 414 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minn., died on April 20, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy from 1968 to 2002.


Raymond Gustafson, 91, superintendent, Southern Substations, Comanche Station, Pueblo, Colo., died on March 26, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 1948 to 1986.


Donald Perron, 90, trouble foreman, Electric Service, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., died on March 8, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1951 to 1986.

Alan Perry, 69, lead fitter, Gas Operations, Pueblo Service Center, Pueblo, Colo., died on April 8, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 1970 to 2007.


Eugene Sabaitis, 80, project engineer, Prairie Island Nuclear Plant, Minn., died on April 15, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1974 to 2001.

Clebourne Sandvold, 89, electrician foreman, Mobile Force, Substation Construction, Minneapolis, Minn., died on April 5, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1953 to 1987.


Alfred Schwark, 93, working foreman, Construction, Colorado, died on April 15, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 1963 to 1986.

Gabriel Sisneros, 47, mechanic, Fleet Maintenance, Summit County Operations Center, Silverthorne, Colo., died on May 2, 2019. He worked for PSCo from 2014 to 2019.


Todd Thompson, 46, equipment operator, Construction Trucking and Hitting, Maple Grove Service Center, Maple Grove, Minn., died on April 25, 2019. He worked for NSP from 2008 to 2019.


Debbie West, 63, customer contact representative, Amarillo Call Center, Amarillo, Texas, died on April 13, 2019. She worked for Xcel Energy from 2002 to 2019.


Rueben Zettler, 89, gas superintendent, Gas Operations, Eau Claire, Wis., died on April 7, 2019. He worked for NSP from 1949 to 1986.

Retiring

Steven Antony, gas technician, Gas Department, La Crosse, Wis., retired on June 28, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 41 years.

Charles “Chuck” Arnold, senior fitter, Fort Collins Gas Operations, Northern Division, Fort Collins, Colo., retired on May 10, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Jim Bauer (eelectron@gmail.com), transmission superintendent, Substations Operations and Maintenance, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on June 3, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 23 years.

Kristen Beaudet (krisb492@gmail.com), field credit support specialist, Revenue Assurance, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on June 6, 2019. She worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.

Paul Becker, substation electrician, Fairbault Service Center, Fairbault, Minn., retired on March 14, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.
Rickey Gonzales, machinist, Harrington Station, Amarillo, Texas, retired on May 5, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 41 years.

Anthony Morris (antoniomorris63@yahoo.com), operator, Gas Operations, Montrose, Minn., retired on June 6, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Jennifer Jo Moses, repairman, Maintenance, Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant, Monticello, Minn., retired on May 31, 2019. She worked for Xcel Energy for 27 years.

Daniel Ratke, welder specialist, Maintenance, Sherco Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on June 3, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 43 years.


James Savage, designer, Texas-North Distribution Design, Southwest Service Center, Amarillo, Texas, retired on May 31, 2019. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.
The power we deliver can do great things for you, but the overhead lines that carry that power can be seriously dangerous. Keep at least ten feet away from them at all times. The same goes for your tools and ladders—even the slightest contact with an overhead line can mean serious injury or death. And if you see a downed line, never approach it. Stay away, and let us handle it. For more information, visit xcelenergy.com/Safety.