

XTRA

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NEW BILL:

Effort brings host of significant improvements

REPLACEMENT:

Minnesota cast-iron replaced during major project

ADVERTISING:

New campaign honors customers' 'point of view'

Transmission

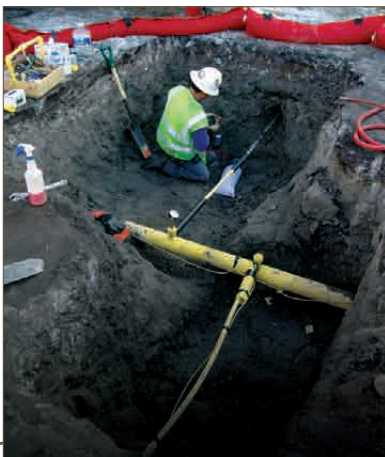
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An organizational realignment in Transmission last year, combined with work in previous years, prepared the business area for the task ahead in 2013 – executing more than \$1 billion in capital work in one calendar year. Pictured here is a transmission structure in the Denver area. For more information, please see story on page 12.

Family sends thanks for diligent efforts

Dear Xcel Energy:

On a recent Saturday, a gas line to our home was accidentally broken while a water line was being repaired. Your crews were called out that night to restore gas to our house.

They worked out in the cold and into the morning hours to complete the repairs. We just want to say thank you.

Because of your crews' diligence and efforts, our 85-year-old parents were able to celebrate their 65th anniversary with a dinner in their home on Sunday, as planned. We so much appreciate this kind of service.

—The Nelson Family, Lakewood, Colo.

'Your company truly is exceptional'

Dear Xcel Energy:

Thank you so much. I never imagined that such an immediate, fully supportive and helpful response would be possible, but your company truly is exceptional.

I am so grateful that you were and are able to work with me. A small extension is exactly what I needed, and your company has gone above and beyond any customer service outreach that I have ever experienced.

You can believe I will be telling whoever will listen about how much you have helped me out with this circumstance. Thank you again so much.

—A Thankful Customer, Sartell, Minn.

'A bright spot for many reasons'

Dear Xcel Energy:

Thank you for taking care of us in Canton, S.D. Xcel Energy is always so responsive and great whenever we need service. And you always step up when asked to support projects, etc. in Canton.

You are a bright spot for many reasons. Thanks again.

—Amy Nelson, City Manager, Canton, S.D.

PHOTO OP

DEMONSTRATION

The Cunningham/Maddox emergency response team at the Cunningham/Maddox Generating Complex near Hobbs, N.M., occasionally works with the Hobbs Fire Department on high-angle rescue training. The ERT also helped out the fire department with an activity for local school children to let the kids get a firsthand look at the tools and equipment used on a day-to-day basis. In this photo from Maddox's Denny Young, one of the day's activities is pictured – in which students put on a harness, were hooked up to a pulley system, and with the help of team members, were hauled up and lowered on a practice trailer wall.



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 Public Policy and External Affairs will be published. Please submit high-resolution digital photos to the editor at the e-mail address listed on the back page of this publication. By submitting images for "Photo Op," employees give Xtra permission to run the photos.

NEW BILL

New customer bill brings host of significant improvements

For most of us, paying bills is not on our list of favorite things to do. So it makes good sense for businesses to send out bills that make the process as straightforward and painless as possible.

Xcel Energy recently has taken steps to do just that.

Billing statements are key tools for the company to communicate with customers. And industry research shows that many customers – about 40 percent – will continue to prefer to receive paper bills over electronic versions.

Currently, about 70 percent of Xcel Energy customers receive paper bills, said Kelly Frankenfeld, director of Marketing. Yet surveys done for the company by the market research firm JD Power showed that customer satisfaction with Xcel Energy's gas and electric bills was one of the lowest scoring areas for the company.

To tackle that finding, employees from Marketing teamed up with Customer Care staff to consider the reasons for customer dissatisfaction with the current bill – and to create a new one that better met customers' needs. The newly designed Xcel Energy bill will be launched in the second quarter of 2013.

The team found that customers wanted billing statements that are straightforward, easy to understand and provide useful information in a clear format, she said. Market research revealed that customers considered the old bill too text heavy, and the payment amount and due date too difficult to locate.

"JD Power research shows that customers also want their bill information to be better organized," Frankenfeld said. "They would like the amount due and due date to be easier to find and read, as well as a short summary statement of payment information. And they want consumption graphs included on their utility bills so they can monitor their energy use."

In response to this customer input on the company's gas and electric bills, the Marketing/Customer Care team set out

to redesign the current bill.

"We involved a number of internal and external focus groups, numerous discussions on color, and countless exchanges on the more than 4,000 test scripts that needed to be executed prior to implementation," said Renee Wagner, director of Billing Services.

The new bill brings a host of significant improvements, she said, including a more intuitive interface, at-a-glance information with high readability, pragmatic use of color, consistent terminology and educational content.

"The first page of the new bill displays a summary of a customer's payment information, consumption graphs, a calendar highlighting the due date and the company's contact information," she said. "At a glance, customers will have all the information they need to quickly assess their monthly bill amount and payment information. More usage information will follow on pages two and three, providing the same level of detail on our current bills."

The new bill offers customers a clear visual display of their electric or gas consumption, including a comparison of the current year versus the previous year that provides customers with a frame of reference for their bill amount. The new bill's summary page provides an overview of the bill in an easy-to-read engaging format, she said.

"Instead of contacting our call centers to ask a high-bill question, they can easily see the bill amount use data and temperature from last year, giving them the information they need to understand their bill," Frankenfeld said.

"The bill was designed so the reader's eye would first see the amount due and due date, move to the consumption graphs and end on the calendar," she added. "It takes our customers on an information path to answer their billing questions and allows them to confidently pay their bill."

"Two of the main factors from the JD Powers survey that

Clean Air-Clean Jobs project lands green award, recognized at international conference

The company's Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act (CACJA) project captured the New/Green Project of the Year Award presented by CG/LA Infrastructure, a leading services provider for global infrastructure markets.

Xcel Energy's CACJA project is a key component of Colorado's State Implementation Plan (SIP) for regional haze.

"We are pleased that the Clean Air-Clean Jobs project has been recognized as a valuable contributor to making a difference in Colorado's efforts to improve the region's air quality and meet new federal requirements," said Gary Hudson, vice president of Energy Supply. "It's another good example of the company's investing to modernize and upgrade our power plants and other infrastructure."

"The project provides the opportunity to retire aging coal units that are nearing the end of their useful life and replace them with cleaner burning natural gas," said Randy Larson, senior project manager for retrofitting Cherokee Generating Station in Denver. "It also upgrades the coal units we will keep in service with advanced controls to reduce emissions."

The award was presented to Larson at the recent North American Strategic Infrastructure Leadership Forum in Denver, in which he was a presenter.

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper spoke at the conference, which featured a look at more than 100 infrastructure projects from a variety of business sectors and geographic locations. Local representatives to the conference also indicated they were pleased with the project's recognition.

"Innovative projects create jobs and are the foundation of a robust economy," said Tony Milo, of Move Colorado, a private industry organization that supports Colorado community, business, and political leaders. "We're proud that Colorado projects are nominated to receive these prestigious awards because they embody true creativity and forward thinking."

The project dates back to 2010, when the Colorado Public Utilities Commission approved an emissions-reduction plan for Xcel Energy under the state's Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act. Among other things, the plan calls for Xcel Energy to retire 593 megawatts of coal-fired generation, replace retired generation with a new, cleaner 569-megawatt natural gas plant built on the Cherokee site and reduce emissions from 951 megawatts of coal-fired generation by installing modern emissions controls.

To date, Cherokee's Units One and Two have been retired, and their cooling towers removed, with demolition of the units' joint chimney now under way. Certificates for Public Convenience and Necessity are approved for emissions-control retrofit projects at Pawnee and Hayden generating plants, and the new natural gas combined-cycle plant at Cherokee.

NORTHERN STATES POWER COMPANY

Xcel Energy
RESPONSIBLE BY NATURE

ACCOUNT INFORMATION

ACCOUNT NUMBER	DUE DATE
51-1234567890-1	MM/DD/YYYY

YOUR MONTHLY ELECTRICITY USAGE

YOUR MONTHLY NATURAL GAS USAGE

SUMMARY OF CURRENT CHARGES (detailed charges begin on page 2)

Electricity Service	MM/DD - MM/DD 000 kWh	\$00.00
Natural Gas Service	MM/DD - MM/DD 000 Therms	\$00.00
Current Charges		\$00.00

ACCOUNT BALANCE

Previous Balance	As of MM/DD	\$00.00
Payment Received	Check MM/DD	\$00.00
Balance Forward		\$00.00
Current Charges		\$00.00
Amount Due		\$00.00

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR BILL

Thank you for your recent payment.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BILL?

See the website: xcelenergy.com
Email us at: info@xcelenergy.com
Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Please Call: 1-800-855-4399
Hearing Impaired: 1-800-855-4399
Toll-free: 1-800-855-4399
Or write us at: XCEL ENERGY, P.O. BOX 9, EAU CLAIRE, WI 54602-0009

PAY YOUR BILL

ACCOUNT NUMBER	DUE DATE	AMOUNT DUE	AMOUNT ENCLOSED
51-1234567890-1	MM/DD/YYYY	\$00.00	

To avoid a late pay charge of 1% of the unpaid balance, payment of full amount must be received by due date. Make your check payable to: XCEL ENERGY

SEPTEMBER 2019

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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XCEL ENERGY
P.O. BOX 9477
MAPLE, MN 55484-0477

we expect to be resolved include customers clearly knowing when their bill is due and exactly how much is due – both of which were not as obvious on the previous bill,” Wagner added. “Another important factor is that Xcel Energy will now have a single bill format for all four operating companies. Having just one format throughout our service territory will help streamline calls from customers who need to contact us about their bill.”

The new bill format also moves away from separate inserts of additional information about safety, marketing campaigns or regulatory issues, coupled with customer bills. Instead, that information will be printed directly on the bill itself and will offer the opportunity for full-page updates at the end of the bill.

Marketing has been working closely with Customer Care to create this new design, she said, which will be more efficient and cost-effective while streamlining customers’ bills and increasing readership of that important information.

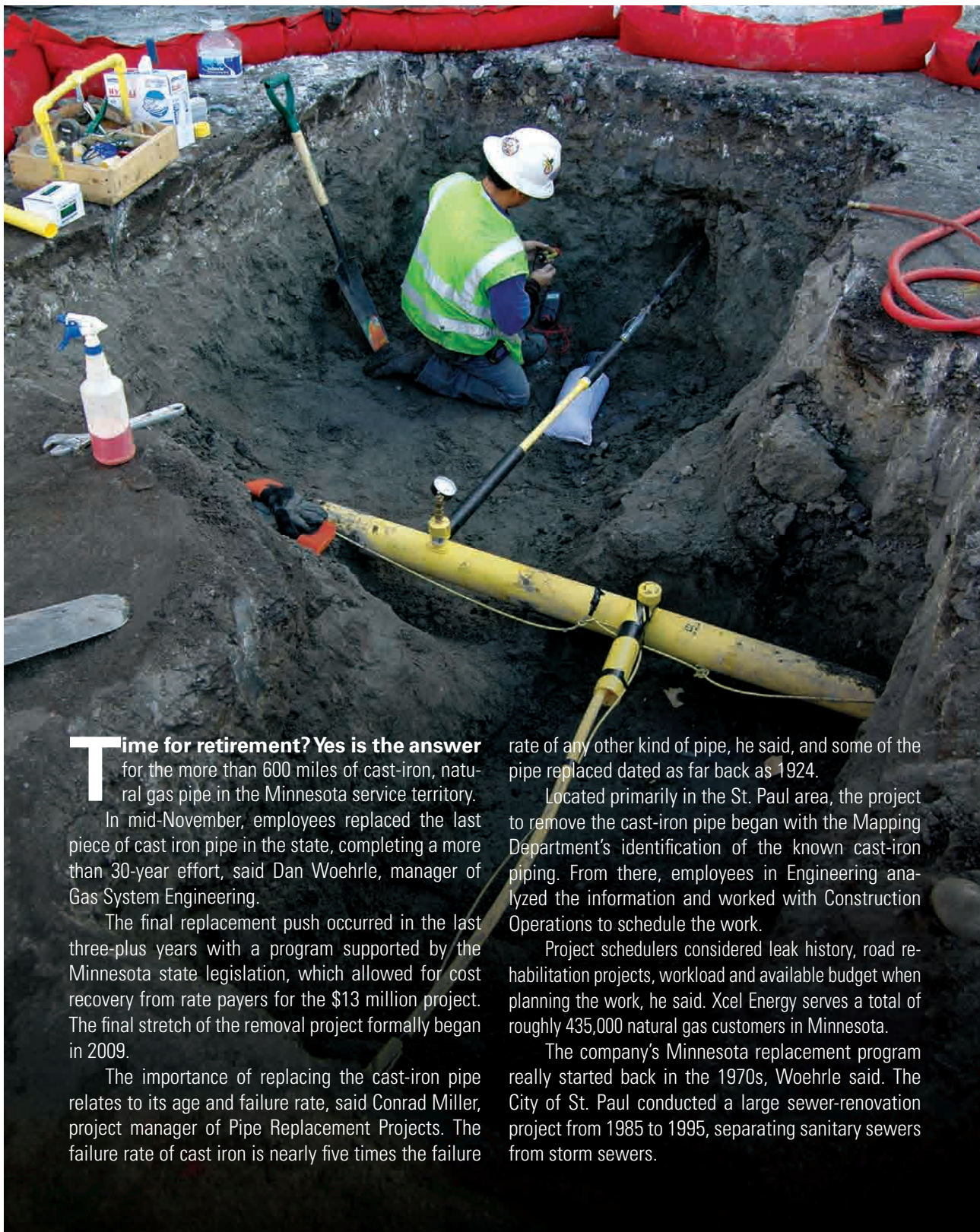
Preliminary response to the new bill has been positive, Frankenfeld said. Both business and residential customers approve of the new billing format. Market research shows that in a side-by-side comparison of the new and previous bills, residential customers in all markets preferred the new bill.

In a side-by-side comparison, 87 percent of residential customers preferred the new bill design to the current bill format, she added. That dynamic is echoed in marketing surveys of Xcel Energy business customers as well, with 76 percent preferring the new bill design.

“We anticipate the new bill will increase our customer satisfaction by clarifying information presented on the bill,” Wagner said. “And with graphs and color, readability will increase – all which makes me very proud and excited about getting it into our customers’ hands.”

Replacement

Antique pipe-removal effort complete in support of gas-system modernization



Time for retirement? Yes is the answer for the more than 600 miles of cast-iron, natural gas pipe in the Minnesota service territory.

In mid-November, employees replaced the last piece of cast iron pipe in the state, completing a more than 30-year effort, said Dan Woehrle, manager of Gas System Engineering.

The final replacement push occurred in the last three-plus years with a program supported by the Minnesota state legislation, which allowed for cost recovery from rate payers for the \$13 million project. The final stretch of the removal project formally began in 2009.

The importance of replacing the cast-iron pipe relates to its age and failure rate, said Conrad Miller, project manager of Pipe Replacement Projects. The failure rate of cast iron is nearly five times the failure

rate of any other kind of pipe, he said, and some of the pipe replaced dated as far back as 1924.

Located primarily in the St. Paul area, the project to remove the cast-iron pipe began with the Mapping Department's identification of the known cast-iron piping. From there, employees in Engineering analyzed the information and worked with Construction Operations to schedule the work.

Project schedulers considered leak history, road rehabilitation projects, workload and available budget when planning the work, he said. Xcel Energy serves a total of roughly 435,000 natural gas customers in Minnesota.

The company's Minnesota replacement program really started back in the 1970s, Woehrle said. The City of St. Paul conducted a large sewer-renovation project from 1985 to 1995, separating sanitary sewers from storm sewers.



Company crews worked along side the city to replace old cast-iron gas-main pipe – generally in the middle of the street – with new polyethylene pipe.

“These days, we pretty much use all polyethylene plastic,” Woehrle said. “Generally, we install smaller, higher-pressure pipes on both sides of the street, where it is less likely to be hit during other construction projects.

“We’re now operating 60-pound gas systems, using smaller diameter pipes,” he added, “instead of a single larger-diameter main that operated at one-fourth of a pound in middle of street.”

The polyethylene pipe comes in rolls and generally is trenched in without joints, except at a few T intersections, Woehrle explained. Cast iron tends to become brittle over time, and it has plenty of joints, which means greater potential for leakage.

“We have always performed leak surveys on our gas mains,” he said. “And cast iron has historically leaked at a higher rate than other materials, such as steel or plastic.”

The company eliminated a lot of the old main during street-maintenance projects, Woehrle said.

“When we first started keeping records in 1970, we had

619 miles of cast-iron main, generally in the St. Paul area, and in older communities such as Red Wing, Stillwater and Winona,” he said.

Most of the cast-iron main replaced in the older communities also dated back to the 1920s and 30s, Woehrle said.


Replacing the cast-iron pipe contributes to Xcel Energy’s overall goal of modernizing its gas system to continue providing reliable and safe service to its customers in the 21st century, he explained.

“In eliminating cast iron from our systems, we have eliminated a significant amount of risk,” Woehrle said.

All utilities that have cast-iron pipes are generally in the process of replacing them, Woehrle said.

“It’s an industry topic. The U.S. Department of Transportation has published several alert notices about cast iron and its brittleness,” he said.

A similar program is under way in the Xcel Energy’s Colorado service territory, with a scheduled completion date of year-end 2014.

And what happens to all of the old cast-iron pipe? It’s generally left in the ground, to deteriorate over time, Woehrle said. 



PIPE REPLACEMENT

Project schedulers considered leak history, road rehabilitation projects, workload and available budget when planning the work on the pipe-replacement project. Replacing the cast-iron pipe contributes to Xcel Energy’s overall goal of modernizing its gas system to continue providing reliable and safe service to its customers in the 21st century.



Mobile Devices

Significant change coming in way company handles reimbursement

A significant change in the way the company handles reimbursement of mobile devices and mobile voice, text and data service plans is coming at the end of March.

This change aligns with the company's new Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy. As such, employees are expected to comply with the changes and the March 31 deadline. However, vice presidents do have authority to grant temporary exceptions, said Kile Husen, director of Sourcing and Purchasing.

"This change also will provide flexibility to address the growing personal and business need for these devices among our employees," he said, "and give them the choice to use what device and plan works best for them."

"We recognize that mobile devices are a critical tool used for both our business and personal lives," he added. "And these changes reflect how we use these tools."

Key benefits and features of the change include:

- There will be two stipend levels: up to \$75 a month for voice, text, and data, and up to \$50 a month for voice and text only. An exception process exists for more unique situations and requires vice presidential approval.
- Employees no longer will need to juggle between business and personal phones and billing. "You can use a single device for both, with the company paying its share via a monthly stipend to employees approved for the plan," he said.
- The company has negotiated significant discounts with carriers for both service and equipment for employees. Employees should take advantage by aggregating their lines into a right-sized usage package for their family and then take advantage of these discounts for their full personal family plan, he said.
- Employees will be able to use the Xcel Energy-negotiated contract discounts when buying their devices and accessories, and will own their device and number taking it with them if they leave the company.

Making the change is well worth the effort, based on the experience of Larry Crosby, vice president of Distribution, and Steve Mills, vice president of Operations.

"I found that there were savings for both the company and me personally with the new program and the discounts negotiated," Crosby said. "It worked out better than I had thought."

"I was pleasantly surprised," Mills added. "By combining my personal lines under the negotiated plan, I was able to give up my business phone and still save money."

Many companies are moving to the 'Bring Your Own Device' model, Husen said.


"The program allows employees to have one device and use a 'mostly for work' device for personal use as well, removing any ambiguity," he said. "This is an especially attractive feature for the ever more mobile workforce."

Some users of corporate accounts – an account in Xcel Energy's name for which the company bears payment responsibility – do not need to make any changes. They include bargaining employees and defined groups of non-bargaining employees that share mobile devices or pooled-minute plans.

By March 31, all employees on a corporate account (excluding the above groups) will need to contact their service provider to convert to a personal account. They can also then optimize their service plans with the service provider, including other family lines for bundling and discount benefits.

Other steps are also required, including a Personal Mobile Accounts Application. For more information, please consult the following resources, which you will find by searching on "Mobile Communications" on XpressNet.

- Mobile Communications Services and Devices webpage provides information about mobile vendors.
- Mobile Device webinar recording describes the changes; you'll find the link on the above page.
- The Supply Chain Hotline at 303-628-2644.

"We hope to increase employee awareness of the opportunities to renegotiate their mobile-device rate to gain greater value for themselves and the company," Husen said. "We want to inform employees of how to review their plan to make sure they are 'right sized,' based on their usage and discounts." 



At a photo shoot for the new ad campaign

AD CAMPAIGN

Campaign helps customers understand value Xcel Energy provides

Xcel Energy's new advertising campaign, titled "Point of View," honors the fact that the company's customers each have their own unique point of view.

The campaign's objective is to drive awareness by helping customers understand the value Xcel Energy provides them.

"The Point of View campaign shows our customers the value that Xcel Energy brings to their lives, but does so in a subtle and story-telling manner," said Roy Palmer, senior vice president of Public Policy and External Affairs. "With this campaign, we're telling customers to live their lives in the way they choose, and we'll be there to help with their energy needs."

"Whether we are providing the energy customers need to go about their daily lives or choices to manage their energy use, we are empowering them to live their lives on their own terms," he added.

At the main crossover between the company and its cus-

tomers is Xcel Energy's core product — energy. And that product, as presented through the campaign, requires attention, investment and planning, he said.

"It is about maintaining our infrastructure — the nuts and bolts of what enables our customers to live their lives on their own terms," Palmer said. "Energy is the bread and butter of life. It provides safety, comfort and life enhancement, and our customers rely on us to provide it to them safely, reliably and at a competitive price."

For example, one print ad's copy reads: "Every day, the people of Xcel Energy answer the challenge of providing the energy our customers need to pursue their dreams and reach their potential. We sustain our equipment, poles and pipelines today. And we build for tomorrow. Because empowering you is an awesome responsibility."

The campaign also focuses on how Xcel Energy is contributing to the communities it serves, as a company that works with them to get their needs met, he added.

Other points covered in the new campaign include:

- Xcel Energy offers 120 efficiency and conservation programs company-wide that help customers save money, as well as reduce power plant emissions and conserve natural resources.
- Xcel Energy is making significant infrastructure investments to upgrade its system – \$13.4 billion planned over next four years.
- Xcel Energy has a history of proactive environmental initiatives that take it beyond today's regulations, including its continued role as the No. 1 wind energy provider in the nation.
- Xcel Energy is dedicated to controlling costs and creating efficiencies within the organization.

The brand advertising will be featured in many media outlets and will vary by market, said Stacy Ingram, director of Advertising and Brand Strategy. Media include television, cinema (in-theater spots), radio, billboards, bus shelters, interactive/web, sponsorships, email marketing, social media and search-engine marketing.

In the TV advertising, the campaign uses shot-by-shot storytelling to bring a sense of urgency to simple scenarios that illustrate customers' constant and almost reflexive inter-

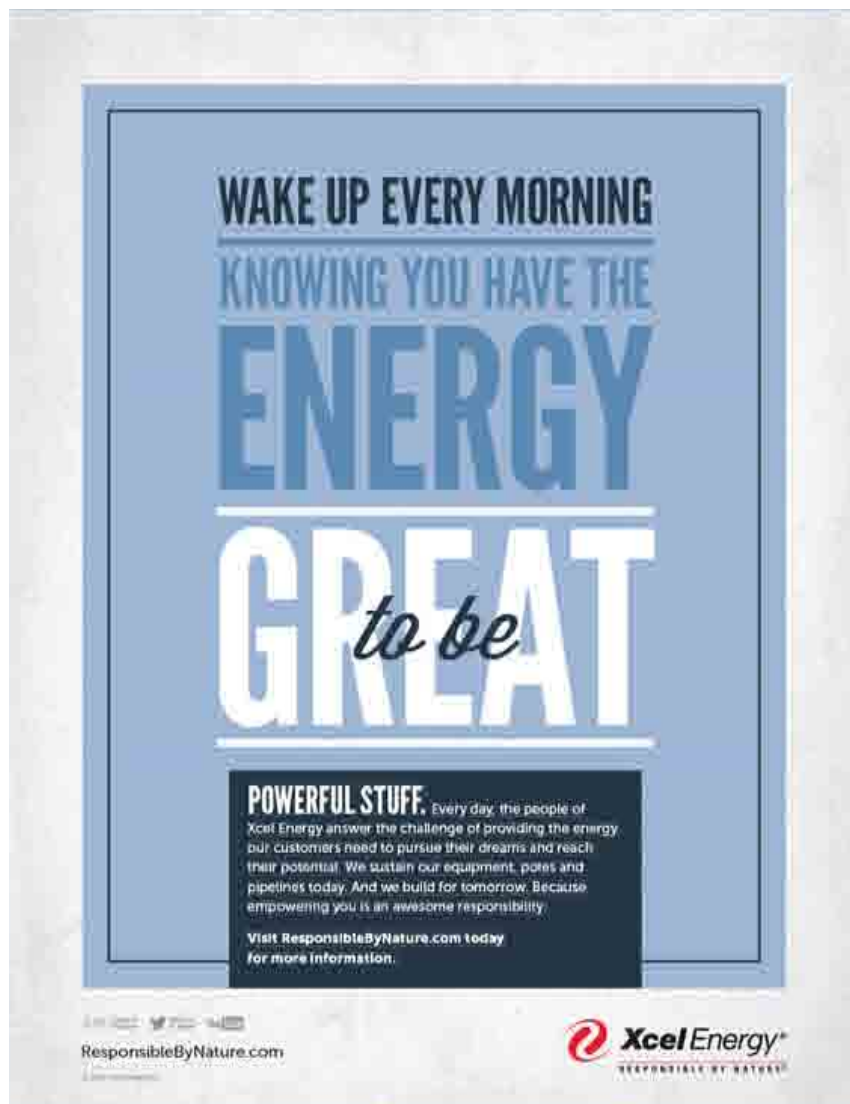
action with Xcel Energy, she explained.

"We want customers to understand and appreciate the value of what we do – reliably powering their everyday lives – and have them feel empowered to choose how they manage their energy use and save money," Ingram said.

In addition to the new brand campaign, the company also is launching advertising promoting several residential and business demand-side-management programs, she said. These messages focus specifically on Xcel Energy products and programs, and have headlines that are a call to action.

"Each headline of the campaign is a rallying cry, an instructive challenge to our customer," she said. "The campaign is a natural evolution from our last campaign, and uses compelling design and typography to give attitude and urgency to the most straightforward of headlines.

"We call the new campaign POV because we know our customers have a point of view," Ingram said. "They are each unique people with unique goals, hopes and challenges. With this campaign, we say, 'Go ahead and live your life the way you want, and we'll be right here to help with the energy you need.'" ❧





LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES

Company leaders hosted four leadership conferences in December and early January – one each in Amarillo, Eau Claire, Denver and Minneapolis. The events were a first for both Amarillo and Eau Claire. Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, provided a “CEO Perspective” presentation at each meeting, and Teresa Madden, senior vice president and CFO, provided a “View from Wall Street” presentation. Other company leaders also participated. Pictured here are a few scenes from the Denver meeting, including Ben Fowke at left.



Transmission

Organization has been steadily working up to the \$1 billion capital spend mark

An organizational realignment in Transmission last year, combined with work in previous years, prepared the business area for the task ahead in 2013 – executing more than \$1 billion in capital work in one calendar year.

“We have been steadily working up to this mark from a level of just \$96 million in capital work in 2002,” said Teresa Mogensen, vice president of Transmission. “The number climbed to \$396 million five years later in 2007, then to \$734 million last year.

“We’ve been forecasting \$1 billion for some time and now we’re here,” she added. “Considerable effort has gone into getting us to this point, and it’s an exciting but challenging time.”

The realignment last June involved the business area’s main organizational functions. It consolidated focus around its three major workflows – delivering new assets, operating and maintaining existing assets, and strategic and business functions.

Hitting the \$1 billion level represents a complete cycle through the development stages for many large projects, including planning, engineering, and siting and permitting, she said. And now the company is at the construction and large-dollar-materials phase for many of those projects, with more coming through after them.

Preparing for the future

Transmission began preparing seven years ago with the Transmission Resource Optimization (TRO) initiative, said Greg Chamberlain, director of Transmission Portfolio Delivery, which includes Project Management, Project Controls, Design and Engineering, and the Siting and Land Rights areas.

The TRO effort included identifying major areas of work needed to prepare Transmission for this kind of growth, he said, and the company has been on a continuous path of improvement ever since. Some of the most significant improvements included:

- Partnering with Supply Chain – “We became an important partner with Supply Chain and established a material-coordinator function,” Chamberlain said.

“We built alliances together to ensure reliable sources for materials and services, and we continue to improve that partnership every year.”

- Improved capabilities in Siting and Land Rights – “These capabilities enabled us to successfully navigate the complex routing and need permits, while maintaining an open and transparent relationship with all stakeholders,” he said.
- Added functions, such as the Project Controls group. “This allowed for coordinated scheduling,” he said, “and enabled us to forecast and plan for needed resources over a five-year time horizon.”
- Developed a model for the \$1 billion CapX projects – “We have been able to work with outside entities and execute projects on time and on budget,” Chamberlain said. “We are currently in the construction phase with all CapX projects, and our current projections show us coming in under budget and ahead of schedule, which will be a tremendous accomplishment.”
- Expanded engineering functions – “Our new Consultant Management Team and System Protection Engineering group have helped us effectively manage the outsourcing of portions of our engineering work, and provided a boost in performance related to our vital system-protection functions.”
- Financial management of projects – “Engineering’s use of a common estimating tool and standardized approach to project estimating have helped our financial management abilities. The Transmission Finance group also has been a great partner in moving us forward.”

Back then, Transmission knew roughly where it was headed, Chamberlain said. “Not precisely, but we got on the path and started the journey,” he said. “We made mistakes and learned from them. Then we achieved improvement on top of improvement.

“We’ve had a great spirit of teamwork, which also has helped move us forward. Growth isn’t easy,





Teresa Mogensen

and transmission projects run into all kinds of obstacles," he added. "You always face multiple reasons to stop a project – but we always keep moving forward."

In addition, Transmission's future work also focuses on operations and maintenance, and all of the effort involved in keeping the company's assets – built through the capital projects – up and running reliably. As capital projects are completed, O&M work will continue to grow in size and scope, he said.

Transmission has been on a steady climb and hasn't really felt dramatic changes year over year, said Roger Hargreaves, director of Transmission Field Operations.

"Every year, you expect that the changes will really feel different," he said. "Looking back, I'm kind of amazed at how far we've come and how gradual the change has felt."

In terms of managing the needed increase in jobs, Hargreaves said it has not been overwhelming.

"We have skilled foremen, and the skill sets of our employees in substations and transmission lines are tops in the industry," he said. "Plus, the projects are not necessarily more challenging – they're just more of them. We've also had an opportunity for younger journeymen to work as foremen and expand their skills."

Transmission also has been expanding its contract resources to prepare for the growth.

"We've had a good balance of internal and contract workers," Hargreaves said. "We took a major step in 2011 and set up five-year alliance contracts with 12 partners – two

for substations and two for transmission line work in each of the three regions."

The company also has been adding to its employee base, as well.

"We've added a lot of support personnel, such as front-line supervisors," he said. "We always had a significant number of contractors, but we've created new construction-superintendent and administrator positions, whose sole purpose is managing contractors."

Construction-wise, Transmission also has been lucky in the Midwest and Colorado. "So far, the competition we expected for contract-construction resources hasn't been as strong as we thought," he said.

However, in Texas and New Mexico, competition is tough, Hargreaves added. "There are a lot of other projects in and near our SPS service territory that are not serving our load. Getting resources to do projects is already very competitive in Texas, and we fully expect more pressure on resources in the NSP territory in 2013 and beyond."

As work becomes more competitive, there will be ongoing challenges, Hargreaves said.

"As transmission work increases throughout the industry, our ability to forecast our material requirements and stick to our schedules will be critical," he said. "But we have been making steady improvement in these areas and are positioned well for increased competition." x

\$1 Billion Breakdown

Transmission is investing \$1 billion in capital work in 2013. Here is a breakdown by operating company:

NSP	\$505 million
NSPW	\$81 million
PSCo	\$93 million
SPS	\$330 million

NEWS BRIEFS

Xcel Energy's website named top utility business site

The top-rated U.S. and Canadian electric and gas utility business website belongs to Xcel Energy, according to the latest E Source benchmark study.

In its first benchmark study of utility websites from the business customer perspective, E Source found that Xcel Energy's website was clear, fast, easy to use, clear and straightforward, with good navigation.

"Xcel Energy did well in this study as our My Account site provides business customers an easy way to register their accounts for online access, and manage billing and payments online," said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. "The My Account site provides an account dashboard where business customers can link multiple accounts to one username. Business customers

also can provide delegate access, which allows access to account information by additional employees."

Stephanie Spalding, research manager and author of the report, said, "The No. 1 feature that business customers most want from their utility website is the ability to view their current bill online. Utilities that can deliver well on the billing and payment features will see an increase in web satisfaction."

Checking the account balance, viewing payment and billing options, and paying the bill were the next most demanded features, after viewing the current bill, he said.

"Even in a noncompetitive industry like regulated utilities, the bar continues to be raised by what customers experience on other websites, such as their bank site, travel or retail sites," said Richard Goodwin, manager of Customer Experience Services at E Source. "Continuous research and improvement of utility websites is critical to providing an optimal online experience."

E Source has provided objective research and advisory services to more than 300 utilities and large energy users over the past 25 years. Its services help customers advance their efficiency programs, enhance customer relationships, and use energy more efficiently.

Company sends crews to help restore system damaged by blizzard

In response to requests for assistance, Xcel Energy deployed crews to Iowa and Wisconsin to help restore electricity service in the wake of a December Midwest blizzard.

Twelve employees and one manager volunteered to deploy from the Twin Cities to help restore electricity service in the Des Moines, Iowa, area damaged by the severe

winter storm. The crews will join up with four crew members from Faribault and Mankato before heading south.

Xcel Energy received a request from Mid-American Energy to help restore service to an estimated 9,500 customers in the Des Moines area. The Iowa State Patrol assisted Xcel Energy's crews as they drove through the storm.

In a separate mutual aid deployment, eight Xcel Energy employees and one manager departed from Eau Claire, Wis. They joined up with a crew in Sparta before traveling to

Madison. The crews assisted Madison Gas and Electric in restoring service to an estimated 1,800 customers.

Utilities maintain mutual aid agreements and routinely assist each other when storms cause massive destruction resulting in widespread, lengthy service outages. The utility requesting aid reimburses the utility whose crews are sent to help.

Xcel Energy sends crews after assessing its own situation and ensuring it has adequate resources to respond to routine and emergency issues in its service territories.

Xcel Energy named 'sustainability leader'

For the first time, Xcel Energy has been included in an international investor publication that recognizes the world's most sustainable companies.

RoebecoSAM, which conducts corporate sustainability assessments for the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), has published The Sustainability Yearbook since 2004 to review trends, challenges and opportunities in corporate sustainability. This annual report also highlights the best work in corporate sustainability and features those companies with the highest sustainability assessment scores within the DJSI.

Xcel Energy received a 74 percent score on its DJSI assessment and was rated highest for corporate governance, customer-relationship management, climate strategy, environmental policy and management, scorecard and measurement systems, water-related risk management and stakeholder engagement. The best score in the electric utility sector was 87 percent.

"It's truly an honor to be included in this yearbook," said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. "It helps confirm that we are on the right track in meeting the interests of the communities we serve, and are successfully managing a number of challenges related to providing clean, reliable and competitively

priced energy now and in the future."

Xcel Energy was named to the 2012-2013 Dow Jones Sustainability Index for the sixth year last September. The DJSI tracks for investment purposes the financial performance of companies considered best in class for sustainability. Companies are selected based on their strategy, management approach and performance in managing specific economic, environmental and social opportunities and risks.

This past year 3,000 companies were invited to participate in the assessment process, including 129 electric utilities. Only 18 electric utilities are included in the yearbook, with just five, including Xcel Energy, from the United States.



BARBECUE HONORS

Ronnie Walker honing barbecue skills for 20 years

Smoke, spices and special sauces meld together to create the succulent meats of Texas barbecue. For roughly 20 years, Ronnie Walker been honing his barbecue skills and perfecting a variety of his own cooking techniques.

Walker, senior project manager in Transmission, has immersed himself in that culinary world – spending hours carefully blending his own rubs and sauces, honing his cooking skills, and participating in barbecue cook-offs.

His hard work and passion for cooking on a grill have paid off. Walker has been recognized in a variety of statewide barbecue competitions and recently won an important cooking

competition in Amarillo.

“My dad is a big fan of barbecue and has participated in cook-offs for about 30 years,” he said. “I began by helping him and became interested in cooking on my own about 20 years ago.

“I cooked in competition events for six years before I ever placed, which is first through third place,” he added. “It took plenty of trial and error and studying barbecue cooking before I finally began to put together the right combination.”

That combination includes ingredients for dry rubs, sauces and marinades, as well as various cooking woods and cooking temperatures. The effort required a lot of studying and

patience, he said, “and if you don’t keep up with what is winning you will fall behind.”

Walker’s most recent success came at a regional competition at the Elks Lodge in Amarillo last fall. There were 32 cooks entered, many renowned in the Texas barbecue circuit. Walker was honored as the Grand Champion of the competition.

“I felt great about all three meats that I cooked that day,” he said. “It just seemed like everything went together and was very good.

“I cooked the three normal meats – brisket, ribs and chicken,” he explained. “I finished second in ribs, third in brisket and fourth in chicken, and was named the Grand Champion.

“It was a long time coming,” he added. “I’ve been runner-



Ronnie Walker

ago. The trailer is 7 feet long, 2 feet wide and made of quarter-inch steel. It has a special cooking chamber with a smoke box.

Most barbecue competitions require 10 to 14 hours of cooking time, depending on the type of meats being cooked. That means an overnight cooking marathon, but it is an experience that he enjoys.

“We start cooking the night before and stay up all night, turning and tending the meat,” he said. “And, of course, drink some beer.

“It’s a lot of fun. We walk around and get to see people we know, as well as meet new folks.”

The secrets of Walker’s barbecue success? Understandably, he doesn’t want to share the details of his recipes, but he did offer one important tip: low and slow.

“It took plenty of trial and error and studying barbecue cooking before I finally began to put together the right combination.”

up Grand Champion in two cook-offs throughout the years, but this was my first all-around Grand Champion. It felt great.”

Cooking for a barbecue competition is not simply showing up and throwing meats on a grill, he said. It requires days of preparation.

Walker often starts preparing for a cook-off a week or so in advance, mixing his own recipes of sauces and rubs – his own special blends of exotic herbs and spices. Then, several days before the competition, he carefully wraps each cut of meat to be transported in a cooler to the event.

“Cooking in a barbecue competition is a lot more work than most people think,” he said. “You have to start from scratch, and nothing can be marinated at home prior to the event. You can have your rubs and sauces ready, but the meat has to come out of the wrapper without any prior preparation.”

One of the secrets of Walker’s cooking success is his custom barbecue trailer, which he built with a friend 15 years

“The temperature needs to be low, between 225 to 275 degrees,” he explained. “And to cook good meat, it takes time. You can’t hurry the process.

“Barbecue to me is not always just smoking the meat,” he added. “It’s also grilling, which is an art in itself. I use a combination of dry rub and sauce when cooking pork ribs, and my dry rubs contain anywhere from 15 to 20 ingredients.

“My latest sauce, which I recently changed, is ketchup-based, but it also has honey, molasses, brown sugar, vinegars and many different spices. It takes creating many different samples until you think it is right. Then it is up to the judges, who all have different tastes.”

Walker definitely plans to continue honing his barbecue recipes and cooking skills in competitions.

“I’ve qualified for the barbecue world championships every year for the past five years and would like to go one time,” he said “I am hoping that will be this year.” ❧

FRIENDS WE'LL MISS

Richard L. Annett

89, repairman/operator/welder, St. Anthony Falls, Riverside Steam Plant, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Nov. 15, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1950 to 1982.

Robert J. Barona

74, customer service representative, Metro Design, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., died on Oct. 30, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1966 to 1997.

James G. Binzegger

90, died on Nov. 18, 2012. He worked for SPS from 1954 to 1985.

Rosalyn V. Bowman

72, business process specialist, Administrative, High Bridge Steam Plant, St. Paul, Minn., died on Oct. 24, 2012. She worked for NSP from 1977 to 2000.

Albert D. Bridges

73, unit manager, Hayden Generating Station, Hayden, Colo., died on Nov. 12, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1970 to 1995.

Charles Burgess

86, senior associate engineer, Colorado, died on Dec. 13, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1946 to 1991.

Ronald E. Finleon

78, unit manager, Gas Management, Boulder Service Center, Boulder, Colo., died on Dec. 9, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1957 to 1994.

Bill B. Givens

76, lineman/cableman, Seventh Avenue Service Center, Denver, Colo., died on Nov. 20, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1961 to 2001.

John L. Hargrave

89, supervisor, Gas and Construction, Colorado, died on Dec. 13, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1946 to 1985.

Leslie G. Harkins

85, engineer, Colorado, died on Dec. 12, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1964 to 1986.

Sharon L. Heimerl

58, administrative assistant III, Strategy

and Planning, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Nov. 21, 2012. She worked for Xcel Energy from 2007 to 2012.

Kenneth Hietbrink

85, shift supervisor, Pawnee Generating Station, Brush, Colo., died on Dec. 13, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1961 to 1986.

William D. Houser

76, unit manager, Maintenance, Arapahoe Generating Station, Denver, Colo., died on Nov. 11, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1965 to 1994.

Selmer J. Johnsrud

92, area relations manager, South Dakota Regional Management, Sioux Falls Service Center, Sioux Falls, S.D., died on Dec. 17, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1957 to 1985.

Jerome O. Juell

48, rubber goods tester, Electric Repair Center, Maple Grove Service Center, Maple Grove, Minn., died on Dec. 24, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1992 to 2012.

Earl W. Kruse

77, lead machinist, Maintenance, Prairie Island Nuclear Plant, Red Wing, Minn., died on Apr. 12, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1961 to 1991.

John E. Lynch

79, safety advisor, EDS, Colorado, died on Dec. 8, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1955 to 1994.

David M. Macklin

85, supervisor, Electric Meter Department, Colorado, died on Nov. 10, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1961 to 1986.

George W. Marhoun

98, transportation manager, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Dec. 22, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1935 to 1977.

Joseph J. Mies

74, plant engineer, Boiler Maintenance, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Nov. 16, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1957 to 1993.

Thomas E. Miller

86, relief assistant, trouble foreman, Met-

ro West Electric, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Nov. 30, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1947 to 1982.

Bobby W. Murdock

77, field service representative, Dimmitt Office, Texas, died on Dec. 11, 2012. He worked for SPS from 1960 to 2000.

Irving B. Traiser

83, foreman/telephone system technician, Minot, N.D., died on Dec. 6, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1955 to 1990.

RETIRING

L. Wayne Alfonso

millwright, Maintenance, Comanche Generating Station, Pueblo, Colo., retired on Dec. 21, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Rick Bain

(tb410@yahoo.com), control specialist, Operations, Pawnee Generating Station, Brush, Colo., retired Dec. 29, 2012. He worked for Xcel energy for 39 years.

Douglas Brown

maintenance foreman, Production, Jones Station, Lubbock, Texas, retired on Dec. 22, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

David Campa

technician specialist, System Protection, Lookout Center, Golden, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Willis D. Campbell

(w2campbell@comcast.net), senior service investigator, Emergency Services, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 17, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Ron Colson

(rockinroncolson@gmail.com), designer, Central Metro Design, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 40 years.

Ronald K. Dalton

meter reader, Meter Reading, Ft. Collins, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.

Barbara Everard

designer, New Business Design, North Metro Region Headquarters, Arvada, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. She Worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

Frank E. Galicia

designer, Gateway Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 41 years.

Sandy Hadley

(hadley2ama@sbcglobal.net), human resource business consultant, Human Resources, SPS Tower, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Feb. 1, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Price Hatcher

(pj_hatcher@msn.com), structured purchase consultant, Purchased Power and Wholesale Accounts, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., retired on Jan. 11, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Deborah Hoffmeister

(debandgary81@gmail.com), project manager, Sherco Management, Sherco Generating Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on Jan. 10, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for 31 years.

Ginny Martindale

scheduler, System Protection, Table Mountain Service Center, Golden, Colo., retired on Nov. 23, 2012. She worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Steven Meister

(smeister9@comcast.net), senior service fitter, Gas Emergency Response, Valentia Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 24, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Darnell Montey

lead machinist, Maintenance, Prairie Island Nuclear Plant, Red Wing, Minn., retired on Dec. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

John M. Mullaney

designer thereafter, Design & Layout, North Metro Region, Arvada, Colo., retired on Dec. 14, 2012. He worked at Xcel Energy for 43 years.

Eduardo E. Padilla

serviceman, Canyon, Texas, retired on Jan. 7, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 42 years.

Joseph J. Petraglia

(jjpetraglia@comcast.net), senior product portfolio manager, Marketing Operations, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Dan Raatz

gas lead fitter, Gas Construction, Southwest Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Rex Ramirez

working foreman, High Pressure Gas, Brighton Service Center, Brighton, Colo., retired on Dec. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Ron Reish

lead service fitter, Gas Construction, Southeast Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Nov. 30, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Ortwin V. Schauer

mechanic, Maintenance, Cherokee Station, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 18, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Donald Schwarz

service technician, Sparta Service Center, Sparta, Wis., retired on Nov. 2, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Jarel Stephens

subs specialist, Metro Subs, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 40 years.

Johnny R. Tallant

lineman/serviceman, Line Department, Canyon Service Center, Canyon, Texas, retired on Jan. 7, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Wayne Underwood

journeyman welder, Harrington Station, Amarillo, Texas, retired Jan. 18, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Wayne D. VonFeldt

(wdgv.co@netzero.net), plant engineering & technical support manager, Zuni Station, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Joel Galvin

substation electrical engineer, Substation Engineering and Design, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., received his certification as a Professional Engineer, Electrical and Computer Power, in October 2012.

Jamie Jordan

engineer, System Protection Engineering, Marquette Plaza, Minneapolis, Minn., recently passed the Fundamentals of Engineering exam.

Garett Kauer

engineer, System Protection Engineering, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., recently passed the Fundamentals of Engineering exam.

Justin Mirarck

engineer, Meter Performance and Standards, Materials Distribution Center, Henderson, Colo., recently passed the Fundamentals of Engineering exam.

Mohamed Omer

engineer, System Protection Engineering, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., recently passed the Professional Engineer exam.

Justin Radl

staff engineer, System Protection Engineering, Marquette Plaza, Minneapolis, recently passed the Professional Engineering exam.

Xtra retiree web portal

The latest issue of Xtra is posted each month on a webpage on the company's website at: xcelenergy.com/retirees.

Retirees and employees are invited to visit the page to view the latest issue, as well as a number of back issues of Xtra. Links on the page also provide access to various utility shareholder groups.



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