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and customer satisfaction

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Company mentors aid
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ON THE COVER

Unprecedented flooding in many parts of northern Colorado in September washed out roads, prompted evacuations, destroyed homes and businesses, and even claimed lives. Xcel Energy crews responded to the crisis to restore service quickly and attend to the company's damaged gas system. Here, a crew works to repair a gas line in the Boulder area. For more information, please see story on page 8.

Crew's help 'a relief and blessing'

Dear Xcel Energy:

I just want to extend a thank you to your crew, who took care of a transformer problem in our Aurora, Colo., neighborhood. Though we still had electricity, more than 70 homes did not, and after some research, it was determined that a faulty transformer was located behind a home across the street from us.

I spoke with Ken, and he was friendly and professional when explaining the situation to me. [The crew consisted of Gary Souza, working foreman; Ken Myers, lineman; Pat Hall, lineman; and Jeremy Jones, apprentice lineman.]

It's a relief and blessing to know we have such professional and competent crews available to help us 24 hours a day when our lives can be so drastically and unexpectedly disrupted. Many thanks!

—Margee Cannon, Aurora, Colo.

'Those who work to make the service happen are amazing'

Dear Xcel Energy:

I've been a customer of Xcel for about 15 months, and I must say that I've been very happy with the service.

The reports describing where my money goes is nicely detailed, the website's outline is very well crafted, your customer support is quite helpful, and payment options have made things rather easy.

Now that my wife and I are moving out of state and we're no longer able to get service from Xcel Energy, I feel that I must let you know that the company and those who work to make the service happen are amazing.

—Kelson, Minnesota

PHOTO OP



CHEROKEE SUNRISE

Carol Griego, with the Clean-Air, Clean-Jobs project at Cherokee Generating Station in Denver, caught the sun rising on the facility's new construction project last month. Pictured are parts of the power plant's new natural gas-fired units, and in particular, the beginnings of a pair of heat-recovery steam generators.

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 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.

OUTAGE MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY

Reliability and customer satisfaction are keys of new efforts

The screenshot shows a software window titled "Switch Plan List" with a menu bar (File, Filter) and a toolbar (Refresh active, Refresh all, Refresh recent, Open, Help..., Cancel). The main area is a table with columns: Status, Type, Plan #, Assigned To, WorkType, Feeder, Substation, Company, Region, Area, and Map Upd. The table contains 25 rows of data, each with a unique Plan # and various status and location details. The rows are color-coded: red for 'New' or 'In Progress' status, green for 'Field Complete' or 'In Progress' status, yellow for 'Check Rejected' or 'Checked' status, and brown for 'Request Rejected' status.

Status	Type	Plan #	Assigned To	WorkType	Feeder	Substation	Company	Region	Area	Map Upd
New	Construction	700373		COMM	EDA068	LIGHTHOUSE ELE...	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Emergency	700372		Unselected	Unselected	Unselected	Unselected	Unselected	Unselected	No
New	Planned	700370								
New	Planned	700368								
New	Planned	700367								
New	Emergency	700364		DTAP	SHP071	SHEPARD	MN	ME	STP	No
New	Emergency	700363		DTAP	LCR311	LAWRENCE CREEK	MN	ME	WBL	No
Isolated	Emergency	700360		DTAP	LOK083	LONE OAK	MN	ME	NEWP	No
In Progress	Emergency	700356		COMM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	No
Field Complete	Emergency	700355		COMM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	No
In Progress	Emergency	700353		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Planned	700352		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Emergency	700351		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Planned	700350		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
New	Construction	700349		DXFM	Unselected	LIGHTHOUSE ELE...	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Emergency	700348		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
New	Planned	700347		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
New	Construction	700346		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Emergency	700345		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
New	Planned	700344		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
Check Rejected	Planned	700343		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
Checked	Planned	700342		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
Prepared	Planned	700341		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
Request Rejected	Planned	700340		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes
In Progress	Planned	700339		DXFM	EDA084	EDINA	MN	MW	EDNA	Yes

Reliability and customer satisfaction are two of Xcel Energy's main priorities, and efficient and timely management of electric outages is critical to both of those goals.

A new technology integrated this year with the company's electric system already has brought big benefits, helping to quickly address outages while at the same time significantly reducing service crew hours.

The utility industry's use of radio signals to read meters and check their functioning is not new, but Xcel Energy has taken advantage of recent developments in the technology by integrating state-of-the-art improvements into its electric network management system (NMS), said Chuck Plummer, principal leader of the Distribution Control Center at Rice Street in St. Paul.

Part of the technology involves "customer pinging," which allows system operators to "ping" an individual address. This entails accessing a field controller that polls the individual customer's meter to determine if it is energized or

not. The effort can prevent sending service crews into the field unnecessarily.

Minimizing the need to send crews and trucks during an outage to check on meters that many times haven't been affected can eliminate hundreds of unneeded trips, he said. That saves time and money while maximizing field crews' efficiency and their ability to restore service more quickly to areas in need.

"What's changed is the ability to ping meters from within the NMS program," Plummer explained. "The NMS can now show all customers who called during an outage, and all available meters that can be pinged for a response."

If the company pings a meter that responds with 'power on,' employees can cancel the service call and check on the customer call-back information right in the existing application.

"My experience with pinging on a normal day-to-day basis is that the return responses usually come back within minutes," he added. "When pinging during major storms – with more users involved – the response time slows down

a bit, and the returning percentage of useable pings also goes down. However, we still receive enough useable pings that we can cancel hundreds of unnecessary trips during a major storm."

With the new system, dispatchers can receive responses anywhere between 30 seconds to five minutes, he said.

If the "ping" shows that a meter is on, that frees line crews to be redeployed to the next job. The technology really comes into play during the cleanup of single customer outages.

"For our team in Minnesota, that already has allowed us to cancel more than 1,000 jobs," Plummer said. "That's a lot of unnecessary trips avoided, making the technology a proven critical resource in restoring service as efficiently and quickly as possible."

Throughout Xcel Energy's service territory, well over 2,000 service calls have been avoided so far this year thanks to the improvements.

However, "pinging" isn't the only recent improvement to Xcel Energy's NMS system. Oracle Utilities' web-based applications have helped upgrade the network with other enhancements, as well, making the NMS more familiar and user-friendly for employees.

The NMS upgrade was implemented last year, and enhancements included important changes to the switch-plan program, said Rodney Hunter, director of the Distribution Control Center at Lipan Distribution Center in Denver. That program is used to create both planned and emergency switch plans to isolate existing equipment or place new equipment in service.

In addition, the new PowerFlow modeling application allows company users to determine potential system overloads, voltage issues, suggested switching, as well as a host of other

important functions, including enhanced alert notifications for major customers.

The PowerFlow application allows the company to see directional flows of load, he said. And if the company has to switch electricity flows in the system, it can determine in advance if there could be issues involved with the possible switches.

"PowerFlow effectively identifies areas of the system that may be overloaded due to switching during both emergency and planned work," Hunter said. "It also will identify areas that may experience voltage issues, allowing employees to look ahead and mitigate these power-quality issues before actually executing the switching in the field."

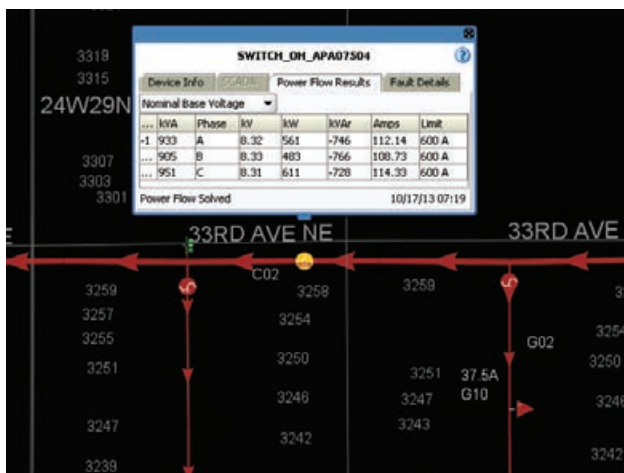
Both Plummer and Hunter said that their teams are working to pilot and implement many of the new, additional features that the Oracle software offers, further enhancing the efficiency of the NMS in responding effectively to outages.

"Right now, we are still working to stay on top of all the technology available in the NMS," Plummer said. "One of the major issues this technology has helped us with is finding errors in our connectivity model, which is the graphic view of the company's electric distribution system."

"As our connectivity model improves, so do our outage predictions," he added. "And this will save us time in the field, improve our accuracy around switching procedures, and help with our comprehensive feeder-circuit planning for Engineering."

"We expect that these enhanced and improved capabilities will continue to help improve our overall operations," Hunter added. "They will make the managing and monitoring of our distribution system better and better." ❧

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MANAGING OUTAGES

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HUNTING MENTORS

Unique event held on company's Tyrone Property in Wisconsin



Xcel Energy and the Indianhead Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently hosted the second annual, special deer hunt event at the company's 4,400-acre Tyrone Property, southwest of Eau Claire, Wis.

"Hunting has always been an important part of my life, so I wanted to give back to people who also have a passion for the sport but might find it difficult to participate," said Mick Werdin, maintenance technician at the LNG Plant.

Werdin and four other mentors served as helping hands to hunters with disabilities at the event on Oct. 5.

"This year, we had five hunters and more than enough mentors participate," said Matt McFarlane, senior permitting analyst with Siting and Land Rights.

McFarlane, along with Brittini Ruberg, who also works in Siting and Land Rights, coordinated the event.

"The mentors simply offered any necessary assistance and something all the hunters appreciated – good company," McFarlane added.

While wheeling a chair, carrying oxygen or using a cane,

these hunters all were mobile and independent.

"When I got injured 22 years ago, one of my major concerns was that I wasn't going to be able to continue hunting," said Karl Anderson of Ramsey, Minn., and member of Capable Partners. The group provides hunting, angling and other outdoor recreation opportunities for disabled people.

"You're only limited by your own mind," Anderson said. "You can do things – you just have to do them differently, and that's where events like this help."

The participants heard from a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources warden, and shared stories, food and lots of laughs before heading out to the hunting blinds, widely separated on the vast property.

"I'm stoked to get out there," said Cody Rye, Green Bay college student and son of Rob Rye, plant attendant at Bay Front Power Plant near Ashland, Wis.

In a wheelchair since age five, Cody said hunting – especially bow hunting – has been his life for many years. "It's nice to have a guy out there who can help spot the deer if I can't see it."

For Cody, Kyle Neidermire, manager of Regional Trans-

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The mentors simply offered any necessary assistance and something all the hunters appreciated – good company.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Third quarter earnings announced

Xcel Energy recently reported 2013 third quarter GAAP earnings of \$365 million, or \$0.73 per share, compared with 2012 GAAP earnings of \$398 million, or \$0.81 per share.

Ongoing earnings, which exclude adjustments for certain items, were \$0.77 per share for the third quarter of 2013 compared with \$0.78 per share in 2012.

Third quarter 2013 ongoing earnings declined as a result of cooler weather and higher operating and maintenance expenses. While third quarter 2013 weather was warmer than normal, it was cooler than the third quarter of 2012. These factors were partially offset by rate increases in various states, said stated Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO.

Third quarter 2013 GAAP earnings include a \$0.04 per share charge for a potential SPS customer refund based on FERC orders issued in August 2013 related to a 2004 complaint regarding the allocation of system average fuel costs and base rates. Third quarter 2012 GAAP earnings reflect the \$0.03 per share positive impact for a tax benefit associated with federal subsidies for prescription drug plans.

"While the final electric rate increase in Minnesota was less than expected, the combination of favorable weather and effective management actions position us to deliver 2013 ongoing earnings in the upper half of our guidance range," Fowke said. "In addition, we have updated our financial objectives. We are increasing our dividend growth rate objective to 4 to 6 percent to align with our annual earnings per share growth rate of 4 to 6 percent that should allow us to provide an attractive total return for our shareholders for years to come.

"We are also introducing our 2014 ongoing earnings guidance of \$1.90 to \$2.05 per share," he said. "Finally, we faced another operational challenge with the severe flooding in Colorado, a challenge we again successfully met. Repairing miles of natural gas pipe and thousands of gas and electric meters is substantially complete; again clearly demonstrating that we are well prepared for such events."




mission Initiatives, was that guy.

"My passion is bow hunting, so I was really excited to be paired up with someone who enjoys it as much as I do," Neidermire said.

Mitch Hoyt, a two-time participant who was injured in a hunting accident in 2006, also shared his gratitude.

"I am so thankful for these volunteers who sacrifice their own personal time to spend the day with us," Hoyt said. "Paralyzed or not, it's important to hunt with other people."

One hunter, Steve Harmon, along with his mentor, Tim Kline, a volunteer with the National Wild Turkey Federation, had success and harvested one deer from the property. The hunters all returned to a warm campfire where there was more food, more laughs and, of course, more stories.

Xcel Energy's Tyrone Property is enrolled in the national Voluntary Public Access program and the Managed Forest Law conservation program, making it open to the public for non-motorized, recreational uses. 

THE HUNT

Cody Rye (above), a Green Bay college student and son of Rob Rye, plant attendant at Bay Front Power Plant near Ashland, Wis., was one of the participant's in a recent hunting event on the company's Tyrone Property in Wisconsin. In a wheelchair since age five, Rye said hunting has been his life for many years. On page 6, participants gather and visit before the hunt.



COLORADO FLOODING

Focused and dedicated employees responded to crisis when historic flooding hit state

When historic rains hit in September, creating monumental flooding, parts of northern Colorado became a land where water changed the landscape – both literally and figuratively.

The unprecedented flooding along the state's Front Range washed out roads, isolated entire communities, prompted evacuations, destroyed homes and businesses, and even claimed lives. It also put the natural gas business in a new light for Xcel Energy.

"It was an unprecedented event for us," said Cheryl Campbell, vice president of Gas Engineering and Operations. "The flooding grew from a few localized issues to having a major impact on our gas system. Between the water and

gravity, the resulting erosion tore up a lot of our facilities."

Throughout the flooding that began on Sept. 12 and continued for days as the water pushed east into the plains, employees responded to the crisis, she said, shutting the system down as needed while dealing with lots of rain and difficult navigation.

Employees even responded to help customers in other ways, such as assisting with evacuations, feeding a lost cat, helping local fire departments and leading a stranded herd of cattle to safety.

"I can't say enough about our employees," Campbell said. "They were focused and dedicated – from the beginning of the flooding on through the weeks-long aftermath as we have worked to get the gas system restored and back in





service before the onset of colder weather.

"It makes you proud," she added. "A big thank you goes out to everyone who helped. They did, and continue doing, a great job."

Although the flooding's impact centered on the gas system, the company's electric system also took some serious but isolated hits in the foothills. Water created havoc in parts of Lefthand, Fourmile, Boulder and Sunshine canyons, while in lower areas, the damage was limited mainly to a number of swamped switch cabinets.

"I've been through all kinds of storms – from wind to snow to fire – but now know that flooding is the worst," said Red Clark, manager of Electric Construction and Maintenance. "Access is hard, and roads have to be rebuilt first. It's a whole different challenge, and you just can't get to some people right away."

Nonetheless, Clark and his crews created temporary build-outs to get service up the hills to customers who had

lost service as soon as possible. They used portable substations and even phone company utility poles to string new line.

Sometimes, helicopter flights were necessary to determine how and when to restore service to some mountains communities, he said. For instance, a flight to Jamestown was required to see if sending power back up the hill would be safe.

When the 100-year rains first hit (and some now say they were 500-year totals), the initial 36 to 48 hours of the storm were crucial, said Victor Quinonez, director of Gas Operations/South.

"From an emergency-response standpoint, that is a long time and a lot of stress," he said. "We're talking about keeping the public and our employees safe during a serious weather crisis, and there was much more impact to our system than was evident by the relatively small number of customer outages."

"It was the single most significant challenge that we've



STORM VIDEOS

Please visit Xcel Energy's channel on YouTube.com to see videos on the company's response to both the Colorado flooding and severe storms in the Upper Midwest this past summer. Above, Gene Sipola, a welder with Gas Emergency out of Denver's Lipan Distribution Center, works on flood repairs, while on page 10 (lower left), Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, and Cheryl Campbell, vice president of Gas, survey the damage in Colorado after the flooding.



faced in my career here," he said, which means more than 30 years. "Considering the extended period of damage being inflicted on the system, our folks did a stellar and even heroic job in keeping the gas flowing where it could and shutting it down where needed."

Once the initial crisis passed, the restoration work became the more difficult component of the storm event, he said. However, that work is still under way, now two months later.

One of the company's main supply lines, the 24-inch Front Range pipeline that serves all of northern Colorado, was unearthed near Fort St. Vrain Generating Station and did not come back online for six weeks. That line, along with another critical 20-inch high-pressure pipeline, ended up in compromised conditions.


The storm's timing has since prompted double duty for many employees, as they also work to prep the gas system for winter conditions, Quinonez said.



"We are usually buttoning up the system this time of year, but now have flooding work to deal with, as well," he said. "But we have to be ready for the deep freezes that may lie ahead, so we still have our challenges. It hasn't been business as usual since Sept. 12."

The storm response required a lot of talent and diligence by the entire employee base, he added. The effort took a coordinated effort from many parts of Xcel Energy, including Mapping, Engineering, High-Pressure Operations, Distribution Operations, Customer Care, Community Relations and Strategic Communications.

"It could have been worse at certain moments," Quinonez said. "And it's hard to describe how much impact the system took and how few customer problems resulted."

"A number of people have worked above and beyond," he added. "There were a lot of heroic efforts by a lot of employees. I'm proud of our response to the crisis." 



CYBER SECURITY

Xcel Energy hosts cyber-security symposium for utility IT leaders

A unique symposium hosted by Xcel Energy recently brought together IT thought leaders from more than a dozen utilities across the country, as well as representatives from energy industry associations and federal agencies.

Dave Harkness, vice president of Business Systems and CIO, sponsored the Utility IT symposium, which featured two days of in-depth conversations about the most pressing cyber-security issues currently facing electric and gas utilities.

"As one of the largest electric and natural gas utilities in the United States, Xcel Energy continues to be involved in cyber-security planning at the federal, state and local levels," Harkness said.

"One of the biggest challenges we're faced with is that cyber security is not a single threat," he added. "It's a host of ever-changing threats. That's why opportunities for collaboration are of the utmost importance."

"Events like this one allow us to stay active with various industry and security working groups, so we can detect, coordinate and react as efficiently and quickly as possible when the need arises."



Dave Harkness



Bryan Dorgan

Participants discussed their approaches to building dynamic defense plans for protecting the grid's critical networks as attackers become more brazen and sophisticated. That included a panel with EEL's Scott Aaronson, who offered his insights and expertise based upon his current position as senior director of National Security Policy for EEL. Joining Aaronson was Tim Roxey, chief cyber-security officer for NERC and director of its Electricity Sector Information Sharing and Analysis Center.

Retired U.S. Senator Bryan Dorgan helped kick off the symposium. Dorgan, the former senator from North Dakota, served on the U.S. Energy Committee and continues to be an advocate in urging Congress to explore ways to defend the nation's electric grid.

More recently, Dorgan has become a New York Times best-selling author and has released *Gridlock*, a novel about a conspiracy to introduce a virus into the North American electric grid system in an attempt to cripple the nation.



As one of the largest electric and natural gas utilities in the United States, Xcel Energy continues to be involved in cyber-security planning at the federal, state and local levels.



The symposium held true to Harkness's original vision of fostering a collaborative mind-set across the utility industry and among IT peers, he said, and conversations among the participants is expected to continue beyond the event. Also assisting in the event were Xcel Energy's Randy Huston, who moderated; Will Travis, who spearheaded the planning; and Doug DeGrote, who guided the content.


This effort also will help ensure productive collaboration in future forums, Harkness added, such as the upcoming national cyber drill being coordinated by NERC in November, called Grid Ex II.

The objectives of NERC's Grid Security Exercise (GridEx) series are to exercise the current readiness of participating electric-sector entities to respond to a cyber incident and provide input for security program improvements to the overall power system.

GridEx is a biennial international grid-security exercise that uses best practices and other contributions from the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

NERC conducted the first sector-wide grid security exercise, GridEx 2011, in November of 2011. The exercise was designed to validate the readiness of the electricity sub-sector to respond to a cyber incident, strengthen utilities' crisis response functions and provide input for internal security program improvements.

On Nov. 13 and 14, 2013, Grid Ex II will work on NERC and industry crisis response plans, and identify improvement recommendations for plans, skills and security programs.

The scenario will build on lessons learned from GridEx 2011 and include both cyber-security and physical security components. Look for more on the Grid Ex II drill in an upcoming issue of *Xtra*. 

Sherco Unit 3 returns to service

Unit 3 at Sherco Generating Station in Becker, Minn., has returned to service following completion of repairs after a catastrophic failure nearly two years ago.

"Restoration following such a significant event on such a large unit was extremely complex," said Dave Sparby, senior vice president and group president. "Plant employees, contractors and vendors worked thousands of hours to safely and efficiently return the 884-megawatt unit to service.

"We implemented repairs that ensure Sherco Unit 3 returned to operation with the highest integrity and reliability," he said.

The three-unit Sherco plant is Xcel Energy's largest power generator in the Midwest, providing 2,400 megawatts of electricity.

"Sherco plays an important role in our diverse energy supply, which over the years has provided our customers with safe, reliable energy at a competitive price," Sparby said.

Sherco Unit 3 is jointly owned by Xcel Energy and Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. SMMPA, comprised of 18 municipally-owned electric utilities, owns 41 percent of the unit.

The failure occurred on Nov. 19, 2011, during turbine testing as Unit 3 was being returned to service following a maintenance outage. The event caused extensive damage to the turbine, generator and associated plant systems.

"We want to again acknowledge the Becker, Big Lake and Monticello first responders for their quick assistance, which limited damage from the incident," said Ron Brevig, plant director.

An investigation by external experts found extensive cracking in one row of turbine blades due to stress corrosion. The problem was a function of the original design and was not related to how the plant has been operated or maintained.

Repair costs are estimated to be in excess of \$200 million. It is expected that most of the costs will be reimbursed by insurance proceeds.



FROM HAMMERS TO CHAIN SAWS

Wisconsin employees help out on United Way's Day of Caring

Chainsaws, paint brushes, hammers and many hands were in full motion on a Friday in September, as a group of about 60 Wisconsin employees tackled one of the larger projects during the United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley's Day of Caring.

This year's Xcel Energy project site was the Trinity Equestrian Center in Eau Claire. The nonprofit organization provides therapeutic riding for veterans with post-traumatic stress, as well as day camps and a variety of other services for thousands of at-risk and underprivileged children and families.

Xcel Energy has stepped up to help out at the Greater Chippewa Valley's Day of Caring event for 18 years. This year's team included a few first-timers and at least one retiree who has volunteered at all 18 Days of Caring.

The company volunteers – with help from a local tree service – cut, split, hauled away and stacked more than 50 tall pine trees.

They also scraped and painted roughly 3,000 feet of fence and countless posts, put up a new roof and installed lighting to the alpaca shelter. In addition, some volunteers completed carpentry and electrical projects in the veterans arena and

main horse arena.

"What an incredible day," said Toni Mattson, executive director of the Trinity Equestrian Center. "I can't even begin to thank you for how you so generously invested in Trinity.

In one day, you launched us forward years," he said. "It was transformational and deeply appreciated."

Mark Stoering, president and CEO of NSP-Wisconsin, rolled up his sleeves and painted throughout the morning, before taking a break to thank the volunteers for their hard work and dedication to giving back to the community.

"Last year, when I joined many of you at the Boys & Girls Club in Chippewa Falls, I thought the effort couldn't be topped," Stoering said. "But this year, I've come to realize that your level of commitment and dedication is constant, and that year after year, you'll give it your all to enhance the quality of life in the communities we serve."

With more than 590 volunteers helping 30 nonprofit organizations in Chippewa and Eau Claire counties, the 2013 United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley Day of Caring was the largest ever. 📷



Setting the Framework

Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, announced a new strategy and call to action at a series of four recent leadership conferences, one each in Texas, Wisconsin, Colorado and Minnesota. For more on the new strategic framework, please see the next issue of Xtra. Pictured above on a panel are (left to right) Teresa Madden, senior vice president and CFO; David Eves, president and CEO of PSCo; and Kent Larson, senior vice president of Operations. At left is Ford Brown, manager of Quantitative Risk Analysis, at the Colorado conference.

NEWS BRIEFS

Badger-Coulee transmission line project proposed

Following years of analysis and community involvement, American Transmission Co. and Xcel Energy recently filed an application with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (WPSC) seeking approval to build an approximately 160- to 180-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line from the La Crosse area to northern Dane County.

The Badger-Coulee transmission line project has been designated a multi-value project by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator because it will enable the delivery of energy in support of reliability, economic and public policy benefits.

Studies indicate that the project will offset the need for about \$160 million in lower voltage upgrades in western Wisconsin, provide increased access to the wholesale energy market and could provide \$259

million to \$841 million in net economic benefits over the life of the project. The project also would establish another pathway for renewable energy into Wisconsin with a connection to key load centers.

The WPSC requires ATC and Xcel Energy to propose two route options for the transmission line. More than 90 percent of the approximately 182-mile northern route uses existing utility and Interstate or U.S. highway corridors, and about 60 percent of the approximately 159-mile southern route uses shared corridors.

Both route options have the same end points: Xcel Energy's new Briggs Road Substation near Holmen and ATC's North Madison Substation in the Town of Vienna. If the project is approved, the WPSC will select the final route. The estimated cost is \$514 million to \$552 million, depending on the route.

"The regulatory review process should take 12 to 18 months," said David Rockwell, project manager for Xcel Energy. "During that time, the commission will provide opportunities for the public and other stakeholders to get involved."

If the project is approved, construction of the project would begin in 2016 to meet an in-service date of 2018.

SANCTUARY

Wycoff's work helps wild animals find new peaceful lives at nonprofit

Children and adults alike marvel at the sight of exotic wild animals in zoos and circuses. But throughout the world today, there is ongoing and widespread mistreatment of wild animals held in captivity.

Here in the United States, thousands of wild animals — lions, bears, tigers, wolves, leopards, cougars and others — are kept captive outside of sanctioned and licensed zoos. And often, they are housed in abusive, substandard conditions.

Fortunately, there are caring people concerned about these mistreated animals, who act to provide them with humane treatment and a home adequate to their unique needs. The founders and volunteers at The Wild Animal Sanctuary in Keenesburg, Colo., are one group working with a clear mission.

The nonprofit organization works to “rescue captive large carnivores who have been abused, abandoned, illegally kept or exploited; to create for them a wonderful life for as long as they live; and to educate about the causes and solutions to the captive-wildlife crisis.”

It took just one visit to the sanctuary to convince Keith Wycoff, a working foreman at Arapahoe Generating Station in Denver, of the good and important work done by the sanctuary, and he quickly decided to pitch in and do his part to care for the animals as a volunteer.

“During my first visit, I listened to the stories of how these animals came to be at the sanctuary and felt the need to help,” Wycoff explained. “These animals have never known the wild, and many had never even known what it was like just to have dirt under their feet — only concrete and cages.”

The sanctuary now sits on 720 acres of rolling grasslands roughly 50 miles north-east of the Denver metro area, and provides shelter for nearly

300 large carnivores. It feeds the animals more than 20,000 pounds of food every week.

“The work we do here as volunteers involves assisting animal-care specialists in the everyday upkeep of the sanctuary, including sorting meat, preparing food buckets, cleaning habitats, minor maintenance jobs and educating the public on the crisis of captive wildlife not only here in the United States, but also around the world,” Wycoff said.

The sanctuary is the first of its kind to create a large area of species-specific habitats for rescued animals. It is meeting a critical need, he said, having responded to more than 1,000 requests from private citizens and government agencies to rescue animals from across the United States and Mexico.

In the United States alone, an estimated 30,000 captive large carnivores are kept as “pets” or “attractions,” and are typically abused,





WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARY

It took just one visit to the Wild Animal Sanctuary to convince Keith Wycoff (right), a working foreman at Arapahoe Generating Station in Denver, of the good and important work done by the nonprofit. Wycoff helps the nonprofit out through the company's Dollars for Doing and Volunteer PTO programs.



abandoned or victims of other terrible situations. For instance, there are more than 4,000 tigers held captive by private individuals in Texas alone – more tigers than are living free in their natural habitats throughout the world.

For Wycoff, the work involved in caring for the animals at the sanctuary is deeply satisfying.

"The most rewarding part of working at the sanctuary is the feeling of accomplishment in doing something to help the animals in their survival," he said. "And when you work with them, you can see in their eyes and in their actions how much they like what you're doing for them. They don't approach the fences in anger, but rather in joy and appreciation.

"It's nice not to see the fear or pain they were in when they came here, but rather the relaxed state of an animal living – as close as feasible – in an atmosphere they were meant to live in," he added. "Just to see the animals romp about and play in a large habitat area without having to work for food is a joy."

Educating the public about this ongoing crisis is critical, Wycoff said. The sanctuary welcomes visitors, school groups and organizations to its Education Center, where people learn about the causes and solutions to the widespread abuse of these creatures. Wycoff also said that there needs to be new legislation to address the tragic issue.

"I would like to find even more ways to educate the public about the captive-wildlife crisis," he said. "Joining the organization's speakers program is at the top of my list. And I would like to see more states pass laws like those in Colorado that do not allow exotic species to be owned personally.

"In states where this is allowed, more rules need to be implemented in the caring, health, and welfare of all animals," he added. "A cage with a concrete floor is far from acceptable as a way to keep animals, as you would not find it acceptable with your pets in your own home."

Typically volunteers at the sanctuary are asked to do a minimum of 16 hours a month, but Wycoff often puts in more hours there. Xcel Energy has been very supportive of his volunteer work through its Volunteer Personal-Time-Off program, he said, which offers him five extra vacation days to work at nonprofits.

Wycoff also takes advantage of the company's Dollars for Doing program. Xcel Energy pays the sanctuary \$10 an hour for the first 100 hours of personal time, including weekends, evenings and holidays, that he works at the sanctuary.

"Providing the sanctuary with an extra \$1,000 dollars a year really makes the experience worthwhile for me," he said. "I plan on continuing with my volunteering at the sanctuary well into retirement, as I will be able to give even more time to the welfare of these animals and possibly get my grandkids involved in the experience of a lifetime.

"The captive-wildlife crisis will not be going away anytime soon, so the animals will need our help for years to come," he added. "I invite everyone to volunteer and see what it's all about, and also to visit the sanctuary to see all the wonderful things done here by the staff and all of the volunteers."

The sanctuary is open to visitors year-round. For more information, visit its website at: www.wildanimalsanctuary.org. ☒

FRIENDS WE'LL MISS

Thomas L. Atchley

65, lineman journeyman serviceman, Operations, Perryton Service Center, Perryton, Texas, died on Aug. 29, 2013. He worked for SPS from 1975 to 2010.

Howard J. Berg

86, transportation manager, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Aug. 1, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1955 to 1988.

James C. Bouton

89, electric distribution manager, Colorado, died on Sept. 6, 2013. He worked for PSCo from 1953 to 1985.

Homer D. Briley

86, bindery assistant, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Sept. 9, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1964 to 1982.

Robert B. Burg

85, customer service manager, Corporate Services, White Bear Service Center, White Bear Lake, Minn., died on Aug. 28, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1947 to 1987.

Joseph W. Driscoll

84, customer service representative, White Bear Service Center, White Bear Lake, Minn., died on Aug. 5, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1955 to 1988.

Pearl S. Duggan

92, officer secretary, died on Aug. 15, 2013. She worked for NSP from 1957 to 1986.

Garry L. Dunkin

77, senior clerk, Kipling Service Center, Lakewood, Colo., died on Aug. 30, 2013. He worked for PSCo from 1964 to 1994.

Joseph C. Erickson

77, Colorado, died on Sept. 15, 2013. He worked for PSCo from 1960 to 1994.

Daniel P. Fahey

67, died on Sept. 3, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1975 to 1996.

Mildred E. Fitzgerald

90, word processing specialist, Purchasing, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Sept. 2, 2013. She worked for NSP from 1977 to 1992.

Robert T. Hansen

94, lead plant equipment operator, High Bridge Plant, St. Paul, Minn., died on Sept. 6, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1947 to 1980.

Billy D. Helton

74, CEO, Seventeenth St. Plaza, Denver, Colo., died on Aug. 26, 2013. He worked for SPS/NCE from 1964 to 2000.

Wendell R. Krause

81, head meterman, Meter Shop, Grand Forks Service Center, Grand Forks, N.D., died on Sept. 21, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1951 to 1990.

D. E. Lichtenwalter

88, rate administration director, Denver, Colo., died on Aug. 20, 2013. He worked for PSCo from 1949 to 1987.

Gordon H. Smith

95, lineman, Colorado, died on Sept. 4, 2013. He worked for PSCo from 1946 to 1980.

Paul W. Stevens

71, died on Sept. 8, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1960 to 1999.

Eugene F. Weiand

87, scheduling administrator, High Bridge Plant, St. Paul, Minn., died on Sept. 9, 2013. He worked for NSP from 1959 to 1987.

RETIRING

James S. Anderson

linecrew foreman, Overhead Electric Dept., White Bear Lake Service Center, White Bear Lake, Minn., retired on Oct. 18, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Sharon L. Borine

(*theborines@aol.com*), director, Enterprise Continuity, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Oct. 31, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for five years.

Bruce Carlson

(*brcarlsonsl@gmail.com*), lead plant equipment operator, Operations, Red Wing Plant, Red Wing, Minn., retired on Nov. 1, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Brian Carmichael

(*brcrmch@aol.com*), overhead foreman, Electric Operations, Newport Service Center, Newport, Minn., retired on Oct. 31, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Raiford Daniel

(*kadrad@suddenlink.net*), project commercial manager, Supply Chain, Amarillo Tower, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Nov. 15, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Gerald W. Doran

mechanic, Fleet, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Oct. 7, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 31 years.

James M. Ellinger

(*jellling@aol.com*), quantitative analyst, Load Forecasting and Analysis, Load Research, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., retired on Nov. 1, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Frankie Ellis

working foreman, Construction Services, SPS ATC Building, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Sept. 30, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Amy F. Freeh

(*freehamy@comcast.net*), senior commodity contract analyst, Commercial Accounting, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., retired on Sept. 23, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for 42 years.

Daniel F. Hudek

foreman lineman, Overhead, Maple Grove, Minn., retired on Oct. 4, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Michael Jansen

shift lead, Gas Trouble, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., retired on Sept. 27, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

PEOPLE

Kent Lowman

lead fitter B, Construction and Maintenance, Gas Construction, Valentia Service Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Oct. 18, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Bob Minell

general foreman-system relay specialist, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Oct. 25, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.

Thomas Mohr

(mohrly@gmail.com), transmission system operator-dispatcher I, NSP-Wisconsin System Operations, Eau Claire, Wis., retired on Oct. 25, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Magdeline Montoya

supervisor, Field Operations, Arvada Headquarters, Arvada, Colo., retired on Nov. 22, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for 40 years.

John Mork

welder (steam fitter), Maintenance, Sherco Generating Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on Oct. 2, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Dan Peterson

(danp1953@gmail.com), senior consultant, Business Systems, Marquette Plaza, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Oct. 4, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

David C. Silver

(davidcarlsilver@gmail.com), electrical general foreman, Electric Utility Construction, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on Oct. 24, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 28 years.

Gary Traphagan

district representative-troubleman, OUHD Dept., Eau Claire, Wis., retired on Aug. 7, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Stephen H. Wilson

(stevekathywilson@comcast.net), supervisor II, Field Operations, Substation O&M Relay, Maple Grove Service Center, Maple Grove, Minn., retired on Nov. 18, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for five years.

Mary Woodward

(mary-woodward@comcast.com), senior fuel contract analyst, Coal Supply, Edina Service Center, Edina, Minn., retired on Oct. 28, 2013. She worked for Xcel Energy for 25 years.

Xtra retiree web portal available on xcelenergy.com

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.

In addition, the following phone numbers may be helpful:

- Human Resources main number – 800-689-7662 (Address changes)
- Shareholder Services – 612-215-5391
- Xcel Energy main number – 800-328-8226 (Hit "0" for operator to contact various departments or employees.)

AROUND THE COMPANY

Red Wing Plant receives jobs award

Xcel Energy's Red Wing Plant in Red Wing, Minn., recently was recognized with an award from ProAct, Inc. for the plant's long-term partnership in providing job opportunities for people with disabilities.

ProAct, Inc. is a local organization, in place for 40 years, dedicated to serving people with disabilities and other challenges with a wide range of services to enhance employment skills and self-sufficiency capabilities.

For almost 20 years, the Red Wing Plant has

been hiring ProAct workers to clean up debris around the plant grounds. In recognition of that partnership, the Red Wing Plant was presented with the ProAct's Employer of the Year award at its annual recognition banquet.

"ProAct does a fantastic job of keeping our plant grounds clean of fugitive materials," said employee Reba Brommer, in accepting the award on behalf of the Red Wing plant. "They are professional, hard-working individuals. They wear all required personal protective equipment while onsite and have had zero injuries.

"We are appreciative of ProAct's team for helping keep our grounds clean so we can be a positive influence in the community," she said.



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THE ARCHITECTURAL EQUIVALENT OF

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