

# Denver's Steam System

## The oldest continuously operating steam utility in the world

Under the streets of Denver, about 10 miles of pipes deliver steam to a number of downtown buildings old and new. The steam, generated at three locations in Central Denver, serves some of Denver's most iconic buildings, such as the State Capitol, certain Denver City and County Buildings, the Colorado Convention Center, the U.S. Mint, and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Steam provides an essential service in a compact footprint, offering a reliable choice for downtown energy needs.

### About thermal energy

A predecessor company to Xcel Energy, the Denver City Steam Heating Co., started delivering steam downtown in November 1880. Property owners found that steam from a central plant was safer, more efficient and less expensive than maintaining boilers in each building. In the late 1940s, pipes were run from the Zuni Generating Station, delivering steam that also turned turbines to make electricity.

Xcel Energy's Thermal Energy Department also operates a chilled water plant downtown, which freezes water overnight, when electric rates are low. The melting ice produces water at 40 degrees, which is delivered to downtown buildings. On hot summer days, chilled water service shifts energy consumption to the evening hours and reduces demand for electricity on the downtown grid.

### What's new

In 2016, Xcel Energy received permission from the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to add a third boiler to its Denver Steam Plant at 19th and Wewatta, just west of Union Station. When placed in service in October 2019, it will replace a 70-year-old unit at Zuni Station, which was retired from electric generation in 2015 after 115 years of service.

### Facts and figures

- In addition to the Denver Steam Plant, two other steam plants currently serve customer needs: the State Steam Plant at the Colorado Capitol Complex, and Zuni Station, south of Mile High Stadium.
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- Xcel Energy's Denver steam system also includes nine major regulating stations, 203 steam vaults and about 10 miles of steam distribution piping.
- Steam is used mostly to heat buildings, but it can also power water heaters, laundries, food processing and industrial uses. At its Denver location, the U.S. Mint uses Xcel Energy-generated steam to wash coins.



Learn about our diverse mix of energy sources at [xcelenergy.com](https://www.xcelenergy.com).