

Historic MGP Project

INVESTIGATING FARGO'S LEGACY MANUFACTURED GAS PLANT SITE

Background

The city of Fargo notified Xcel Energy of planned infrastructure improvements in NP Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets in the spring of 2015. Our locating maps showed old pipes from a former manufactured gas plant, which we determined should be removed during the city's construction work. While removing the pipes, we discovered potential soil and groundwater impacts in and around the pipes. We promptly informed the city, county and state environmental agencies, and the pipes were removed from the street, along with impacted soil. Based on this discovery, Xcel Energy is now working with state and local officials and area property owners to take prudent steps to further investigate conditions of the historic MGP plant site and surrounding properties.

We need more data to determine next steps. The company intends to perform additional investigation, and if MGP impacts are discovered, to remediate or mitigate those impacts as necessary to protect human health and the environment. This part of town historically has been used by railroads and other industries. We expect there will be an investigation as to other sources of contamination in the area too. If there are other responsible parties, we will seek to recover costs as appropriate.

Site History

An MGP once operated from approximately 1885 through 1960 between University Drive and 11th Street North and just north of NP Avenue, west of downtown Fargo. The plant produced gas from coal and oil that was distributed through a network of pipes to customers for lighting, heating and cooking—much like natural gas is distributed and used today. We are investigating the history of the MGP plant, but it appears that Northern States Power, a subsidiary of Xcel Energy Inc., may have acquired the MGP site from Consumers Power Company in the late 1930s. In 1969, the main plant site was sold and redeveloped into a residential apartment building. A smaller parcel to the west of 12th Street North was redeveloped into a commercial building in 1966. The EPA performed a site assessment in 1994 and concluded that no further action was required at that time.



The Legacy of Manufactured Gas Plants

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that thousands of MGP sites operated in the United States between 1815 and the 1960s. These plants used large brick ovens to heat coal and other ingredients. As the fuels were heated, they produced gases that were filtered from the ovens, stored in tanks and distributed by a network of pipelines throughout the community. By the 1950s, MGP production declined as natural gas infrastructure was built across the country. Many MGPs closed, were abandoned and eventually demolished—sometimes leaving waste materials and byproducts behind, such as coal tar, oil and ash or cinders. Coal tar was the most predominant byproduct from MGPs—a dark, sticky liquid that was often sold and reused for fuel, roofing and road resurfacing. MGP byproducts could also be found in dyes and even cough syrup.

Public Safety

Public and worker safety is Xcel Energy's top priority. After discovering potential soil and groundwater impacts, we promptly removed materials to provide clean corridors for construction crews to begin working in the area of NP Avenue, helping to protect city utility workers. We have no information that indicates the public has contact with impacted soils. Most of the former MGP plant site is sealed by paved parking lots or streets. With respect to the potential for MGP-related materials to become airborne in buildings, the initial data we collected so far indicates that the current conditions in the area are considered safe and acceptable according to EPA standards. In addition, area ground water does not supply local drinking water. While all of these facts and the data collected to date do not indicate a current cause for concern, we want more information and believe it is prudent to further investigate site conditions.

About Xcel Energy

Northern States Power, a subsidiary of Xcel Energy Inc., and its affiliates have provided natural gas and electric service to hundreds of communities for more than a century. We are committed to protecting public health and the environment, which at times, has required that we investigate and remediate a number of former MGP sites within the eight Western and Midwestern states where we operate. The state and federal officials who oversee these efforts have recognized our work to successfully investigate and remediate these sites.

Xcel Energy is working with state and local officials and property owners to further investigate the former MGP plant site and adjacent properties. We will keep you informed as we obtain more data through meetings and our website xcelenergy.com/FargoMGP.

More Information

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