

Mississippi Crossing

Transmission project
faces elements during
river-crossing venture

XTRA

APRIL 2015 → VOLUME 15 • ISSUE 05

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The base of a transmission tower is set in place during the CapX2020 Mississippi River crossing project.





Staying engaged in public policy an important part of the Strategic Call to Action

(Editor's Note: Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, periodically writes a blog on XpressNet, as well as other articles and communications. Xtra will feature Fowke's comments on a recurring basis to share his thoughts with a wider audience.)

I recently spent some time in Denver attending our board of directors meeting and participating in PSCo's Legislative Day at the State Capitol. It was a good week, and great to see a sizable turnout joining in for Legislative Day.

As I told employees at the Colorado Capitol, staying engaged in public policy is an important part of our Strategic Call to Action because it greatly affects our business. The stroke of a policy pen can make a significant impact.

The more we learn about the issues that affect us, the better advocates we become for our customers and shareholders.

I have since enjoyed spending time with employees and retirees during Legislative Day in Wisconsin on March 3 and in Minnesota on March 26. As always, the issues ranged from the mundane to downright compelling, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to thank our government affairs teams for tackling them all.

Employee engagement is part of making a Positive Effect and comes in many forms. Few are as

dramatic as when Xcel Energy employees come to the rescue in real-life situations.

A few weeks ago, you may have read the story of Colorado employees Jose Campos and Marisa Montoya saving the life of their coworker, and Austin McCracken rescuing a young car-accident victim.

We were proud to give those employees Life-Sustaining Awards, which is something we do more often than you might think. In 2014, in fact, we presented 16 Life-Sustaining Awards for actions that ranged from providing CPR to performing the Heimlich maneuver to preventing a suicide.

I can't say for certain that Xcel Energy employees are more likely to have the skills, confidence and compassion to step up in an emergency, but I do believe that our focus on safety and staying aware of our surroundings make a difference.

I know who I would call on in an emergency situation.

We don't publish life-sustaining stories until the employees actually receive their awards, but 2015 already has some inspiring ones, including a service dog that played a critical role in helping one of our contract workers. Watch for these stories and others in XpressNet News and a big thank you goes out to those employees for being ambassadors of the highest order. ←



SETTLEMENT REACHED

COLORADO MULTI-YEAR AGREEMENT SUPPORTS THE 'IMPROVE OPCO PERFORMANCE' PILLAR

Xcel Energy reached a settlement agreement with parties on its 2014 electric rate case filing in Colorado in late January. And on Feb. 24, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) approved the agreement, which will result in a three-year rate plan with moderate rate increases in 2015 and 2016, and a small decrease in 2017.

Under the agreement, typical residential rates will increase by 1.31 percent in 2015 and an estimated 0.66 percent in 2016. There would be a slight decrease of approximately 0.11 percent in 2017. Typical small-business customers would see similar changes.

"The settlement agreement further demonstrates that at very reasonable cost to our customers, we have been able to achieve significant environmental improvements in Colorado," said David Eves, president of PSCo. "By 2016, we will complete nearly \$1 billion of investments in state-of-the-art emission controls, and plant-retirement and replacement projects.

"At the same time, we have managed our costs to significantly offset the customer rate impacts from the new, major

investments," he added. "This three-year plan is a good solution for our Colorado customers, and it also will help Xcel Energy plan and manage its business."

The agreement supports one of the company's four strategic pillars, "Improving Operating Companies' Performance." The pillars are critical to the company's future — in particular to its effort to deliver on the Strategic Call to Action to think and act like a competitive business.

"We have seen this multi-year model work very well in Colorado before," Eves said. "After a successful initial three-year plan, we are pleased to have a second three-year plan in place.

"With this sound approach to rates over the next three years," he added, "we can now focus on working with stakeholders on pressing energy issues like the best way to integrate the various types of solar energy on our system or how to meet the requirements of potential new carbon rules."

The settlement agreement addresses the company's three major cost increases driving the June 2014 request for higher



DAVID Eves



ALICE Jackson

rates, said Alice Jackson, regional vice president of Rates and Regulatory Affairs.

Those include costs associated with implementation of the Clean Air Clean Jobs Act (CACJA); increased property taxes that had not yet been collected; and depreciation expenses. The CACJA was passed by the state legislature in 2010 and requires utilities to develop and implement emissions reductions plans.

Under the agreement, parties agreed that:

- A CACJA cost adjustment (or “rider”) will be added to customer bills as the investments are completed in 2015 and 2016. Xcel Energy’s efforts under CACJA will result by 2020 in an 80 percent reduction in sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury emissions, and contribute to the company’s 35 percent planned reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions, when compared to 2005 levels.
- Property taxes will be partially addressed. Xcel Energy and the parties to the settlement agreed to adjust the amount requested for property taxes, based on levels in place in 2013. But if actual property tax expenses in 2015, 2016 or 2017 are less or more than the 2013 levels, then any such differences will be tracked and credited to or collected from customers through rates effective after 2017.
- Depreciation expenses will not change. Xcel Energy and parties will participate in a separate proceeding to address depreciation. The depreciation expenses resulting from this proceeding will be included in the next electric rate case for rates to be effective in 2018, when the current multi-year rate plan is completed.

Parties to the settlement agreement included Xcel Energy, the staff of the CPUC, the Office of Consumer Counsel, Colorado Energy Consumers, Colorado Healthcare Electric Coordinating Council, Climax Molybdenum Co. and CF&I Steel (doing business as Evraz Rocky Mountain Steel), Energy Outreach Colorado, the Federal Executive Agencies, the Kroger Co., and Wal-Mart Stores and Sam’s West. “I believe this settlement lays a strong foundation for a low-carbon future at a reasonable cost, which is what the legislature intended,” said Joshua Epel, CPUC chairman.

The comprehensive and unopposed settlement agreement also stated a return on equity (ROE) of 9.83 percent, Jackson said. The ROE is the return that a utility is authorized to earn on the equity portion of its investment, in order to attract the capital needed to ensure safe and reliable service at reasonable cost for customers. The CPUC sets an ROE that it deems to be reasonable, but there is no guarantee that the utility will actually earn that return.

Overall, the agreement’s major components will result in a net revenue increase over rates effective when the case was filed of \$53.2 million.

“This is a good outcome for our Colorado customers, as multi-year plans provide additional stability and certainty on electric bills,” Jackson said. “It also allows us to achieve required state air quality improvements at reasonable costs to consumers.” ←

PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

The Productivity through Technology (PTT) effort aims to help Xcel Energy solve workforce challenges, make smart investments and minimize customer price increases while improving reliability.

It's also about providing employees with new tools and ways of working to help the company become more efficient, said Michael Lamb, vice president of Operating Services and the Enterprise Transformation Office.

"We must think and act more like a competitive business so that our customers want us to be their energy provider," he said. "To answer the Strategic Call to Action, however, we need more than just a competitive mindset. We need to bend the cost curve, become more engaged than ever and drive to operational excellence."

The PTT journey began in 2012 when employees recognized the need for change. The PTT team received input from hundreds of employees across Xcel Energy.

"Our employees had ideas about improving data quality, integrating our systems and streamlining our processes," Lamb said. "To put those ideas into action, we needed a powerful technology platform – one that would allow all systems to speak the same language."

A cross-functional team of more than 50 employees recommended the enterprise resource planning software, SAP, as the best integrated system for the company's needs, he said. SAP will allow the company to better collect, store, manage and interpret data from its many business activities.

SAP's technology is referred to as an

integrated system because all of its modules connect to a central location where data is stored. Each module covers a separate business function, and real-time information is shared with all of the various modules as soon as it is entered.

"Of course, technology is only part of the answer," he added. "To really change as a company, we need to consider people and processes. Specifically, we need to look at how we work, what we do and how best to drive change."

Today, the PTT teams are answering those questions by building the General Ledger (GL) and Work and Asset Management (WAM) systems.

The new GL will standardize and simplify financial accounting and reporting, said Jeff Savage, senior vice president and controller. "It will improve the visibility and connection between



Productivity through Technology



business operations and financial results to enable Xcel Energy to make better business decisions,” Savage said.

The new ledger is being built now on the SAP platform. Next steps include converting data to feed into the new system, and testing and training to meet the go-live date of January 2016. The project continues on track, but a lot of hard work lies ahead, he said, and the team is planning for the challenges of running a new system in the first year.

The new financial tools, along with SAP for Work and Asset Management, will provide leaders with the end-to-end financial detail they need to make better decisions. “The ability to make more informed decisions about our investments will allow us to better control our costs while serving customers reliably,” Savage said.

The WAM effort, which focuses on the way the company does business, will standardize operations and drive towards one unified way of doing business. Process and role improvements, as well as scheduling and mobile tools, will allow the company to be more competitive and meet customers’ expectations. WAM teams are working on the processes now to pave the way for the new SAP system to come to ensure success.

“PTT is very much in alignment with

what Energy Supply has been doing with its Operating Model to bring the benefits of standardization to the entire fleet,” said Riley Hill, vice president of Energy Supply. “We see PTT as helping us to build upon the success we’ve had and bring it to the finish line.”

In addition to Energy Supply, the WAM effort also directly affects the Transmission, Distribution, Gas Operations, Supply Chain and Nuclear business areas.

In 2015, PTT cross-functional teams will continue work on early-process releases that helped lay the foundation for change by standardizing key processes in preparation for WAM. Those early releases include: Field Scheduling and Work Assignment; Increased Strategic Sourcing; Inventory Management and Material-Flow Optimization; Fleet Optimization; Engineering Design and Estimation; and Procurement Optimization.

In addition, the WAM effort includes managing the lifecycles of the company’s power plant, transmission and distribution assets; streamlining design, construction and maintenance operations; maximizing supply chain performance; enhancing safety; and improving regulatory compliance.

Moving into early 2016, the company will begin using the new General Ledger system. And at the same time, teams will

continue the WAM design and build.

By late 2016 and into 2017, WAM system improvements will roll out across Xcel Energy – creating benefits for employees and the company, and supporting the change to think and act more like a competitive business, Lamb said.

To help the PTT team better understand how to make the effort more successful, a survey was circulated last month via Change Tracking, an anonymous web-based tool. Change Tracking helps organizations effectively navigate and manage change by assessing change readiness at both a project and team level.

The survey included 44 questions, and the assessment results will provide insight into what will be required to support the success of PTT.

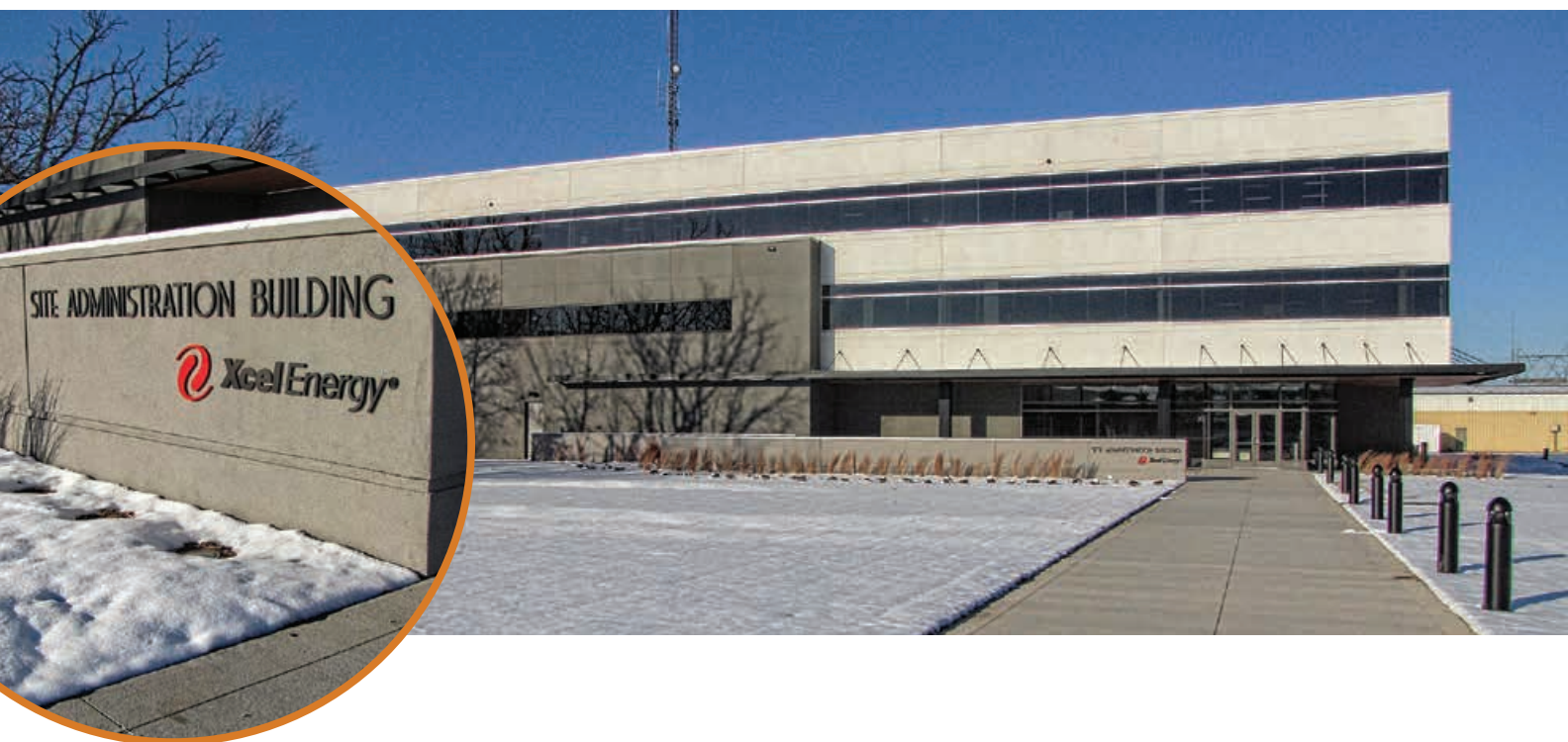
From the beginning, PTT has relied on and worked directly with employees to identify opportunities for improving core business operations, and this survey is a continuation of that effort.

“We know that to remain a top-performing utility, Xcel Energy must make smart technology investments,” Lamb said. “As you can see from our timelines, this is a long-term effort – with the intent to create a permanent culture that embraces technology and change for productivity gain.

“The timing for this initiative is ideal, as we face many different challenges to improve the way we do business,” he added. “We are now laying the groundwork to meet those challenges as we focus on people, process and technology.” ←



MICHAEL Lamb



PRAIRIE ISLAND CELEBRATES NEW ADMIN. OFFICE BUILDING

Following a short 12 months of construction, Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant recently celebrated the completion of its new Site Administration Building.

Plant leadership and officials from Shaw-Lundquist, the building partner on the project, were in attendance to celebrate the opening of the new 77,000-square-foot building. A ribbon cutting was followed by a reception with members of the project team, the Xcel Energy Nuclear department, Prairie Island management and Shaw-Lundquist.

A heightened awareness regarding safety was in force from day one of construction – with a drive toward zero injuries.

"This project was completed with safety in the forefront every step of the way," said Kevin Davison, Prairie Island site vice president. "The millions of hours spent constructing this building from the ground up resulted in no injuries – that's a significant accomplishment."

The building features a professional and modern environment, with energy-efficient technology and adaptability for future office-space needs. It also has a meeting space that can accommodate up to 800 people.

The new Site Administration Building will house more than 300 employees.

"Aside from providing a much-needed improved work environment, Prairie Island also will benefit significantly from a savings on operating costs," Davison said.

For more than 40 years, a network of trailers outfitted as office space had been the worksite for many employees at Prairie Island. The buildings, many of which were original to the construction of the plant, were serviceable, but inefficient in many ways in terms of managing costs to enabling collaboration.

Prairie Island officially broke ground on Jan. 30, 2014, on the new building project.

"This building is a great addition to our site," Davison said. "We have created a new, professional environment that replaces our network of trailer office spaces."

"It's more than a change of location for many of our employees," he added. "This building will change the way many of our people work together. I am excited about the opportunity that consolidating employees in this space will have for cross-functional work and improved collaboration."

In addition to providing updated office space and better opportunities for working together, the new building has several business advantages. It will save on heating, lease agreements and electric costs, along with other O&M savings.

"We are now closer to each other, and we're able to bring larger groups together in our new meeting space," he said. "We haven't been able to do this at Prairie Island in the past."

The new Site Administration Building now houses employees working in Projects and Engineering, along with several other teams that had been located in the office trailers. ←

Xcel Energy rated high on Corporate Equality Index

Xcel Energy received 90 points out of a possible 100 on the 2015 Corporate Equality Index (CEI), up from 75 last year. The CEI, compiled by Human Rights Campaign, is a national benchmarking tool on corporate policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees.

"This rating demonstrates Xcel Energy's commitment to our corporate values of promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion and treating all people with respect," said Mark Saurebrey, consultant with Inclusion and Engagement.

Mike Davidovich, chair of the Supportive Association for GLBTA Employees at Xcel Energy (SAGE), credits the group's efforts for contributing to Xcel Energy's high rating.

"Members and supporters of SAGE at Xcel Energy are a large part of why we had high scores in the past and why we are nearing 100 today," Davidovich said. "Engagement and awareness in the Xcel Energy community is an important piece of Diversity and Inclusion, and SAGE members demonstrate that best."

The rating process takes into account factors such as a company's equal employment opportunity policy, equivalency in spousal and partner benefits, competency training and accountability measures, LGBT-specific public engagement efforts and responsible citizenship.

News Briefs

Xcel Energy announces leadership change at Monticello nuclear plant

Xcel Energy has named Pete Gardner site vice president at Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant, in Monticello, Minn.

"During more than 32 years in commercial nuclear operations, Pete has acquired exceptional experience and leadership vision that will benefit Xcel Energy's nuclear fleet overall," said Tim O'Connor, senior vice president and chief nuclear officer. "As director of site operations at Monticello since 2013, Pete helped improve plant performance, and he's now in the perfect position to lead the plant to excellence."

Among positions Gardner held prior to joining Xcel Energy

in 2013 were nuclear plant manager for Exelon and team manager for plant evaluations with the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations, an organization that sets industry-wide performance objectives aimed at promoting high levels of safety and reliability at U.S. nuclear power plants.

Gardner succeeds Karen Fili, who has been named site vice president at Southern Co.'s Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 3 and 4, the first new reactors to be built in the United States in nearly three decades.



MONTICELLO



PETE Gardner

Coal-fired generation at Black Dog coming to an end

Xcel Energy has notified Minnesota regulators and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator of its intent to stop generating electricity with coal at Black Dog Generating Station in Burnsville, Minn., this month, due to changing environmental regulations. The notification was the last step in a multi-year resource planning process.

Black Dog's two remaining coal units generate 232 megawatts of electricity. When the units cease operations, Xcel Energy will rely on other resources to ensure reliable service for its customers. The company will continue to operate the 300-megawatt natural gas-powered unit

located at the Black Dog site.

The coal units' retirement will trigger a multi-year decommissioning project. Starting this year, Xcel Energy will begin to remove coal-handling equipment, and will close the coal yard and ash pond areas. The company is working with local and state authorities to prepare for the closing of the coal and ash handling areas.

In addition, Xcel Energy is working with the city of Burnsville and Dakota County to allow the use of plant property to construct a recreational trail that will connect Jasperson Park to the Fort Snelling State Park Trail.

CapX2020 Success

Crossing the Mighty Mississippi



Getting to work on a boat or barge makes for an interesting commute – especially on days when hitting huge chunks of ice in below-zero temperatures are involved. Just ask the crews who worked on the CapX2020 Mississippi River crossing project over the past fall and winter.

Abandoning their cars and trucks near shore, they traveled the river in all kinds of weather to construct a triple-circuit transmission line, part of the 150-mile, CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345-kilovolt line.

The work traversed the state border for more than a mile, near Wabasha, Minn., and Alma, Wis. It included the construction of two tower locations – one on an island and another on a peninsula accessible only by water.

The effort required hauling all needed materials and equipment back and forth by barge, said Grant Stevenson, project manager in Transmission. That included hundreds of concrete trucks, a 250-ton crane and numerous structure pieces weighing more than 100,000 pounds each.

Five sets of transmission structures are now set near the river, resting on 15 pile-cap foundations needed as part of the river crossing. Because of poor soils and to protect the foundations from high waters, the project required the extensive

foundations, which consist of more than 300 16-inch steel pipe piles – some driven as deep as 130 feet.

The length of the steel pipe used to create the piles alone totaled more than 25,000 linear feet, or six miles. And the concrete pads that top the piles are six feet thick.

The foundations, designed by a bridge engineering firm to withstand erosion from spring floods, required 4,500 cubic yards of concrete – enough to pour a six-foot-wide sidewalk that would stretch more than 10 miles long.

The 1.3-mile, river-crossing segment replaced an existing and smaller Dairyland Power Cooperative line constructed in 1955. The existing line over the river was removed and replaced with the new line.

The final project came together after years of collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which manages the property on the Minnesota side of the crossing. Contingency plans were set in place to ensure the work was completed prior to eagle-nesting season, one of a number of FWS requirements.

For instance, the circuits cross the river with a horizontal plane, an accepted practice that reduces the likelihood of bird strikes. The project also required significant coordination with other government agencies, engineering firms and contractors.





"For all our planning, one thing we could not control was the weather," Stevenson said. "We planned the start of construction for early August, typically a low-water period on the river."

However, heavy late-summer rains brought unusually high water levels on the Mississippi, delaying the start of construction, although tree clearing did start in August. After the waters receded, the river then was closed to barge traffic because of sand that had washed into the shipping channel.

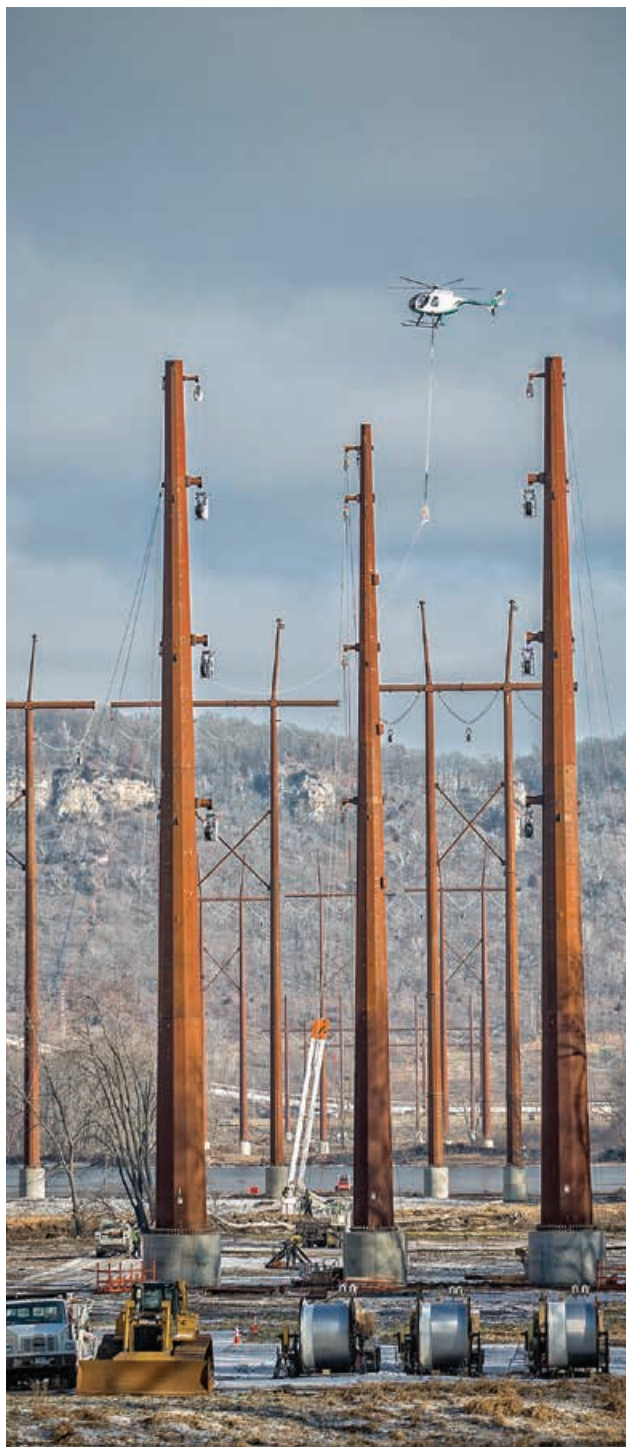
"Thanks to great cooperation with our contractors, we managed to work through these issues," he said. "And we were able to complete construction in early February, on time and under budget, with no injuries or lost-time incidents."

Several local contractors helped with the \$20 million effort,

and Xcel Energy crews installed the poles and conductor. Linemen were dropped from helicopters onto the structures to help install the lines over the river at the end of the project. Helicopters also were used to string conductor, as well as clip the lines and install bird diverters.

"Helicopters would actually hang the linemen on a long rope and drop them off on top of the 195-foot structures, where they would clip and connect wires and perform other final steps of installation," Stevenson said.

J.F. Brennan, a 95-year-old marine construction company based in La Crosse, Wis., played a unique role in the project, as it has helped with several previous utility river crossings. Adverse weather, high water and material-delivery cycles must be meticulously managed when barges and towboats are the



Mississippi River Crossing

Five sets of transmission structures now sit near the river, resting on 15 pile-cap foundations needed as part of the CapX2020 Mississippi River crossing project, which wrapped up at the end of February.



primary source of transportation.

At one point, 22 different concrete trucks were cycling loads to one of the foundation sites. Over the course of one day and using four towboats, a total of 97 loads of concrete were transported to the islands by barge, two trucks at a time.

Stevenson actually started on the line in 2006 and was involved in all of the permitting and design work. He will see it through to the end of construction next year.

"This effort is the only thing my kids have ever known that I've worked on, and I think it's unique to be able to work on such a long project from beginning to end over a 10-year period," Stevenson said. "It's very satisfying, and it's a lot of fun." ←

CapX2020 Facts

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region. It is expanding the electric-transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service; meet state and regional energy policy goals; and support a diverse generation mix, including renewable energy. The five CapX2020 projects are a \$2 billion investment in 800 miles of 230- and 345-kilovolt transmission lines.

Xcel Energy powers up Texas segment of TUCO-Woodward transmission line

The signature transmission project in Xcel Energy's Power for the Plains grid-improvement plan for Texas and New Mexico went into service last fall, providing a host of benefits to communities across the area, as well as to the industries that underpin the regional economy.

The TUCO-to-Woodward, 345-kilovolt transmission line between Xcel Energy's TUCO Substation north of Lubbock was energized when a connection was made with an Oklahoma line segment built by Oklahoma Gas and

Electric Company (OG&E). Xcel Energy built the line from TUCO to just east of the Texas-Oklahoma border.

Total cost for Xcel Energy's portion of the TUCO line is approximately \$205 million, shared among the member utilities of the Southwest Power Pool – the regional transmission organization overseeing grid reliability in portions of eight south-central states, including the Texas Panhandle-South Plains region and eastern New Mexico.

Last May, Xcel Energy and OG&E completed another major transmission connection between Hitchland, Texas, and Woodward. This and the TUCO projects are among 22 critical improvements grouped in the Power for the Plains enhancement project, which was launched after a 2010

Southwest Power Pool study. Of these 22 projects, 11 have been completed.

"Electricity demand has grown phenomenally across northwest Texas and eastern New Mexico, driving the need for more power and enhanced delivery systems," said David Hudson, president of SPS. "These connections boost reliability and save customers money in the long run by opening this region to new power markets."

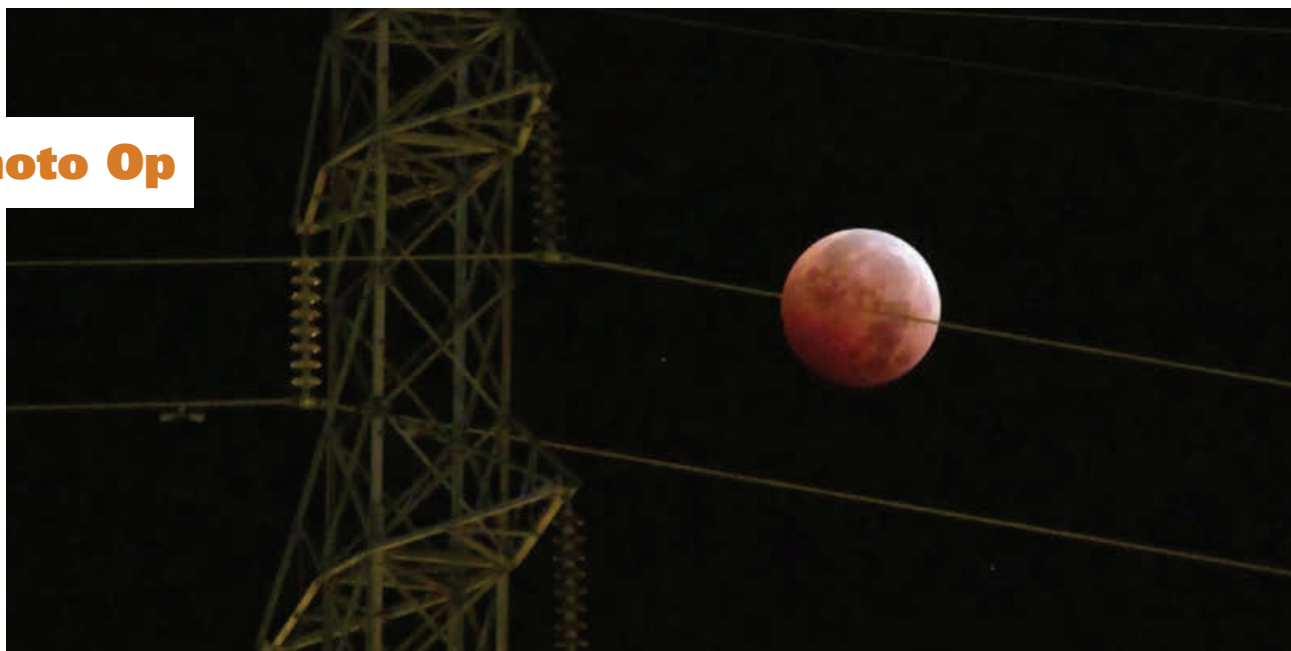
With new connections such as the TUCO and Hitchland lines, Xcel Energy can take advantage of more opportunities to buy and sell power from the regional market to provide the lowest cost mix to regional customers at any given time, Hudson said. And in the summer peak season, the company will have access to more power to meet peak demand even when all the area generating resources are being used.

The TUCO-Woodward line and others like it also boost the reliability of the area grid, offering more alternatives to move power into and around the area in the event of outages on other major lines. Additionally, the new lines provide more export capacity for wind energy generated from area wind farms, Hudson said.

In addition to the TUCO-Woodward project, the company currently has more than 1,000 miles of 345-kilovolt projects in permitting and under construction in seven states. In the Upper Midwest, Xcel Energy is the largest partner in the CapX2020 transmission expansion initiative, a unique collaboration of 11 utilities. (Please see a related CapX2020 article on page 10.)

News Brief

Photo Op



Dark Side of the Moon

Mark Schafer, with Information Technology at Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant in Monticello, Minn., took this photo of a total eclipse of the moon through a transmission tower and line near the plant. Schafer took the photo at 6:10 a.m. on Oct. 8, 2014.

Editor's Note: "Photo Op" is a standing feature in Xtra. Each issue, a photo submitted by a reader or produced by a member of Corporate Communications will be published. Please submit high-resolution digital photos to the editor at the email address listed on the back page of this publication. By submitting images for "Photo Op," employees give Xtra permission to run the photos.

Climax Mine 'Sky Crane'

In recent months, Transmission has been performing work to raise some structures near the Climax Mine in Colorado to meet new federal regulations regarding clearance issues. The mine is located west of Denver, between Copper Mountain Ski Area and the town of Leadville.

The main photo here is of an Erickson 'sky crane' helicopter setting a pole. Transmission crews had to fly in all of the material and then climb the related structure to frame it.

In the photo at lower left of another structure, crews were able to get a crane in to set the poles and arm for the tower, but also had to climb the structure because there was not enough room to get a bucket truck on the pad.

Kelsey Lightfoot, a lineman in Transmission who took the photos, said that although the snow on the ground makes the job harder, it helps with storm-water issues because the needed equipment is gentler on the nearby terrain.



Connecting

Ongoing efforts under way to promote inclusion

Diversity affects how we see the world, each other and the company.

At Xcel Energy, the effort to promote a culture of inclusion and connectedness among employees centers around its Business Resource Groups (BRGs), Social Interest Groups (SIGs) and various diversity programs.

"A workplace that is inclusive provides every employee with equal access to professional opportunities and development," said Bev Brown, director of Talent Acquisition Pipeline and Diversity. "Employees work more efficiently and business results are improved when there is an inclusive and welcoming environment in which everyone feels respected and valued."

BRGs, SIGs and other events promoting diversity have grown in popularity in recent years, partly due to the addition of an eighth corporate value – "Promote a culture of diversity and inclusion." Although some groups are more geared toward one interest area, she said, all groups are free and open for any employee to join or support.

"When people realize what diversity and inclusion means to the company, and how it is valued in the Xcel Energy culture, it can help build a foundation that promotes camaraderie among employees," Brown said. "One way we try to do this is through our

business- resource and social-interest groups."

BRGs enable employees to not only build relationships with one another, but also to embrace diversity, both in and out of the workplace. They also support the Strategic Call to Action and the "Transition to a workforce ready for competition" Pillar by getting involved in diversity- and veteran-based career fairs.

"The BRGs take an active role in helping us bring the 'right fit' of talent into the company," Brown said. "They are connecting with high school students to encourage them to pursue a career with us, and they have attended diversity career fairs and shared what it is like to work here and the kind of jobs we offer."

BRG members work together as a team, Brown added, with each member having a specific role. "You can see real teamwork at its finest," she said.

BRGs often meet once a month for a planned event, coffee break or a fun activity. Current BRGs include:

- ECN – Employee Connection Network
- GC-EEE – General Counsel's Employee Excellence and Equality Committee
- MOVE – Military Ombudsmen for Veterans and Employees
- NA-YGN – North American Young Generation in Nuclear
- SAGE – Supportive Association for GLBTA Employees at Xcel Energy
- SOURCE – Strategic Organization Utilizing Resources for Career Enhancement
- Tribal Wind – An inclusive group supporting Native American employees
- WIL – Women's Information Link
- WIN – Women's Interests Network
- XCELENTE – Xcel Energy's Latino Business Resource Group
- XE-WIN – Xcel Energy Women in Nuclear

A recent example is SOURCE's Black History Month event at the end of February. The group hosted Denver Police Chief





**Denver Police Chief Robert C. White
and CBS4 News' Gloria Neal**

Robert C. White, who visited with about 200 employees and talked about his work and life.

White said he started working when he was nine years old to help support his mom and three sisters. When he was 18 years old, he joined the Washington, D.C. Police Department. Eventually, White became the chief of police in Greensboro, S.C.

At the SOURCE event, White went on to refer to recent police incidents in Ferguson, Mo., Cleveland, Ohio, New York City and even Denver, saying, "Policing has changed, but police haven't changed. Police have to be held to a higher standard."

White was named Denver's police chief three years ago. The conversation with Chief White was moderated by Gloria Neal of CBS4 News, the local CBS affiliate.

Social Interest Groups, on the other hand, promote diversity by offering employees a chance to share interests and cultivate relationships.

"I joined Toastmasters to improve my speaking skills," said Judy Ring, account manager with Minnesota C&I Account Management and vice president of the "Education for XNSPeakers" SIG. "What I didn't know was that I also would gain leadership skills and have wonderful opportunities to network inside and outside of Xcel Energy. I know Toastmasters has opened doors for me that I didn't even know existed."

Social Interest Groups often meet once a month for either a structured event or an informal time of networking and fun activities. Current SIGs include:

- Sensational Stitchers – Minnesota knitting and crochet group
- Toastmasters International – Group that provides opportunities for better thinking, listening and speaking
- Toastmasters Minnesota – The XNSPeakers club

Along with the business-resource and social-interest groups, Xcel Energy supports a variety of programs that help

increase knowledge and support the growth of its diversity and inclusion initiatives, Brown said. Programs include:

- Affirmative Action Program – A management tool designed to enhance equal employment opportunity
- Diversity and Inclusion Week – A celebration of diversity at Xcel Energy every September
- Good Faith Efforts – Reporting and recognizing internal and external efforts
- STARBASE Minnesota – Educational program for fourth to sixth graders

Often, company groups will participate in several events a year related to the group's interest, which are usually based on community service or raising awareness on a special issue in the community, she said. Some groups give presentations in schools, while others raise money for charitable causes.

"When you have a passion and you care about something, it brings people together," Brown said. "And that's what is great about our networking groups."

In the past, groups have participated in Xcel Energy's Knowledge Fair in the late summer and Diversity Week in the fall. At these events, BRG and SIG representatives are available to answer questions, promote their groups' efforts and encourage employees to get involved.

"BRGs, SIGs and the diversity programs help employees be more engaged and excited about the company," Michelle Fix-Westall, chair of the Tribal Wind BRG. "They help to recruit new employees, increase employees' cultural awareness and develop leaders for the future."

In other related news, Darla Figoli, vice president of Human Resources and Employee Services, is now the executive sponsor for the company's Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Marvin McDaniel, executive vice president and group president, Utilities and CAO, previously served in the role for the past eight years. ←

Letters

'It started at 5:26 a.m.'

Dear Xcel Energy:

It started at 5:26 a.m. It was cold outside at just 4 degrees. Power was back on by 10:00 or so.

Thank you to the men and women who got the power back to my house. You came out in frigid temperatures to help make my life warmer and better. Thank you, thank you.

Thanks also to the woman in Texas who answered the phone. She was kind and sweet! Respectfully and gratefully, I send my thanks.

—Jo Moore, Golden, Colo.

'You are the best – besides my son-in-law'

Dear Xcel Energy:

I don't know which group or where they came from, but the guys working in my area in Bloomington, Minn., changing out old lines to new, deserve some giant kudos! Especially because they had to work in below-zero temperatures! You are the best – besides my son-in-law who also works out in the elements. Love you guys!

—A Thankful Customer, Bloomington, Minn.

Thanks sent for gas-service assistance

Dear Xcel Energy:

We would like to send a few words of thanks, as well as commend your on-call technician (Steve Mellinger, district fitter, Minturn, Colo.), who worked with us during the night and all day in order to restore our gas service, after the discovery of a leak upon returning home from work.

At all times, Steve was professional, competent, attentive to our needs and acted with the sense of urgency that contributed in large part to the fact that we have heat tonight. Spending New Year's Eve without gas during one of the coldest times of the year would have not only been unpleasant, but could have resulted in our water pipes freezing, creating an added expense.

We are extremely grateful that we were lucky enough to have someone with Steve's skills and kindness working in our area, and hopefully you recognize how significant an asset he is to the company.

—The Bloodworths, Minturn, Colo.

Friends We'll Miss

Alonzo M. Belknap

88, Texas, died on Jan. 13, 2015. He worked for SPS from 1951 to 1986.

People

William F. Boehme

72, shift manager, Power Supply Training, Monticello Training Center, Monticello, Minn., died on Jan. 2, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1963 to 1997.

James N. Cotton Sr.

85, street and shop fitter, Pueblo, Colo., died on Jan. 30, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1951 to 1986.

George A. Des Rosier

95, vice president, Division Operations, Eau Claire, Wis., died on Jan. 18, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1946 to 1981.

Homer J. Eng

92, customer service representative, Minnetonka Electric Customer Service, Shorewood Service Center, Minnetonka, Minn., died on Dec. 19, 2014. He worked for NSP from 1956 to 1986.

Viola F. Erskine

85, secretary, died on Dec. 31, 2014. She worked for PSCo from 1959 to 1986.

John E. Fitch

66, principal technical instructor, Training Center, Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, Welch, Minn., died on Jan. 15, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1981 to 2006.

Robert L. Goggins

80, contract specialist, Contracts Management, SPS Tower, Amarillo, Texas, died on Nov. 19, 2014. He worked for SPS from 1997 to 1999.

Charles F. Griffee

91, supervisor, District Customer Service West, Rifle District Office, Rifle, Colo., died on Feb. 8, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1947 to 1985.

Louis Harts

87, watchman, Security, Human Resources, Headquarters Office Building, Denver, Colo., died on Feb. 12, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1957 to 1992.

Raymond T. Haughey

63, facilities locator, Gas Distribution, Lipan Service Center, Denver, Colo., died on Jan. 24, 2015. He began working for PSCo in 1973.

Joe Head

88, died on Jan. 31, 2015. He worked for SPS from 1949 to 1986.

Bob W. Holmes

94, working foreman, Gas Service and Fitting, Colorado, died on Jan. 10, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1938 to 1982.

Dorsey S. Howell

90, Colorado, died on Feb. 1, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1955 to 1986.

Barney C. Jobe

88, died on Jan. 31, 2015. He worked for SPS from 1951 to 1986.

Leonard A. Jones

73, service fitter, Colorado, died on Feb. 1, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1969 to 1996.

Donald B. Klefsaas

82, retention and class specialist, Office Information Services, 414 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Oct. 6, 2014. He worked for NSP from 1956 to 1977.

Martin C. Lissick

73, welder specialist, A.S. King Generating Plant, Bayport, Minn., died on Feb. 9, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1963 to 1997.

Dorothy M. Miller

85, clerk, Support Services, Boulder Service Center, Boulder, Colo., died on Feb. 4, 2015. She worked for PSCo from 1985 to 1994.

Ronald L. Montgomery

74, lineman journeyman, Lubbock Construction Operations and Maintenance, Littlefield/Slaton, Texas, died on Jan. 26, 2015. He worked for SPS from 1965 to 2001.

William B. Moore

90, material control analyst, Colorado, died on Jan. 26, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1951 to 1986.

Donald P. Nelson

90, inspector, Operations, Metro West, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Jan. 4, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1949 to 1984.

Robert W. Nielsen

86, electrician mechanic, Overhead Construction, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., died on Feb. 10, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1948 to 1984.

Orville C. Oberg

96, superintendent, Buildings Maintenance and Operations, Property Management, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Feb. 1, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1954 to 1987.

Arthur W. Pearson

91, senior serviceman, Gas Service, Colorado, died on Jan. 24, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1953 to 1986.

Richard D. Schally

86, Gas Utility, Minnesota, died on Jan. 15, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1948 to 1988.

Ken Schreibvogel

80, troubleman, Electric Operations, Seventh Avenue Service Center, Denver, Colo., died on Jan. 20, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1967 to 1992.

Richard A. Simoneau

83, plant equipment operator, Operations, Sherco Generating Station, Becker, Minn., died on Feb. 11, 2015. He worked for NSP from 1978 to 1995. Louise F. Smith, 92, Colorado, died on Jan. 11, 2015. She worked for PSCo from 1955 to 1985.

Curt L. Vandenbos

74, designer, Engineering, Boulder Service Center, Boulder, Colo., died on Jan. 26, 2015. He worked for PSCo from 1967 to 1999.

Retiring

Gregory C. Alms

gas designer, Gas Design, Red Wing Service Center, Red Wing, Minn., retired on Feb. 27, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 42 years.

Kristine Andor

automated meter specialist, Distribution Business Operations, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., retired on Feb. 5, 2015. She worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Van Lynn Aschenbrenner

mechanic A, Fleet Maintenance, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on March 31, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 38 years.

Randy D. Bryant

(mvbryant@nts-online.net), journeyman mechanic, Production, Jones Station, Lubbock, Texas, retired on March 31, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Douglas Cook

field service representative, Pampa District, Pampa, Texas, retired on Feb. 2, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Joyce Gasca

legal secretary II, Legal Services, 414 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minn., retired on April 30, 2015. She worked for Xcel Energy for 23 years.

Helen Goebel

field representative, Credit and Collections, St. Cloud Service Center, St. Cloud, Minn., retired on March 2, 2015. She worked for Xcel Energy for 33 years.

Rick Halet

(rmhalet@usa.net), principal engineer, Energy Supply, retired on Feb. 16, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 41 years.

Jerry Hickey

mechanic, Transportation Fleet, Arvada Service Center, Arvada, Colo., retired on Feb. 24, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 43 years.

Reggie D. Johnson

electrician working foreman, Substation Operations and Maintenance, Muleshoe, Texas, retired on Feb. 20, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Henry King

mechanic specialist, Maintenance, Comanche Generating Station, Pueblo, Colo., retired on Feb. 27, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

John Menning

(jbmenning@gmail.com), specialist, Materials and Procurement, Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant, Monticello, Minn., retired on Jan. 15, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 15 years.

Al Nicodemus

plant technician specialist, Plant Engineering, Hayden Station, Hayden, Colo., retired on March 26, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Ron Perry

coal working foreman, Operations, Cherokee Station, Denver, Colo., retired on Feb. 18, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 32 years.

Trudy Popenhagen

(tpopenhagen16@gmail.com), community service manager, Customer and Community Service, Hudson, Wis., retired on April 3, 2015. She worked for Xcel Energy for 31 years.

Mary Rowe

(marydoseydoe@msn.com), LEAP associate, PAR, Denver, Colo., retired on Dec. 17, 2014. She worked for Xcel Energy for 29 years.

Philip G. Severence

lead fitter serviceman, Gas Operations, Fort Collins, Colo., retired on March 13, 2013. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Richard Dean Walker

(silverfox19532001@yahoo.com), instrumentation journeyman, Plant Controls, Tolk Station, Earth, Texas, retired on April 30, 2015. He worked for Xcel Energy for 34 years.

Online Xtra subscription now available

Employee readers of *Xtra* can now opt out of receiving the print version of Xcel Energy's employee and retiree publication, and instead read the online version on XpressNet or via a portal on the company's website at xcelenergy.com.

To complete the opt-out process, employees need to fill out a form on the *Xtra* homepage of XpressNet, providing their name, employee ID and company email address. Those who choose to opt out will receive an email when a new issue is available for online viewing.

The opt-out form and online versions of *Xtra* can be found by clicking on the "Xtra Online" link, located at the bottom of the XpressNet homepage. The online edition of *Xtra* also can be found at xcelenergy.com/Xtra — or from the home page, look under Community/Community Involvement/Retiree Directory (or visit xcelenergy.com/Retirees).

Retiree information

Retirees can opt out of receiving the print version, or request address changes regarding home delivery of the print edition, by calling Human Resources' Service Center at 800-689-7662.

They also are invited to visit the webpage noted above to view the latest issue, as well as a number of back issues of *Xtra*.

In addition, and as a reminder, Xcel Energy's main phone number is 800-328-8226. Just hit "0" for an operator to contact various departments and employees.



414 Nicollet Mall, G0-7
Minneapolis, MN 55401
xcelenergy.com

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US POSTAGE
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XTRA

Published monthly by Xcel Energy
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USE US for stronger communities.

The communities served by Xcel Energy are more than where we work...they're our hometowns. We're invested in our communities, and proud of the role our people play in making them the best possible places in which to live and work.



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