Xcel Energy®

XTRA

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THE PLAYBOOK

Energy Supply effort spells out 'how we do business'

ENGINEERING:
Energy-efficiency group works to improve processes

WIND FENCE:
New structure at Comanche wraps portion of coal yard

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Employees gather across states to support community efforts

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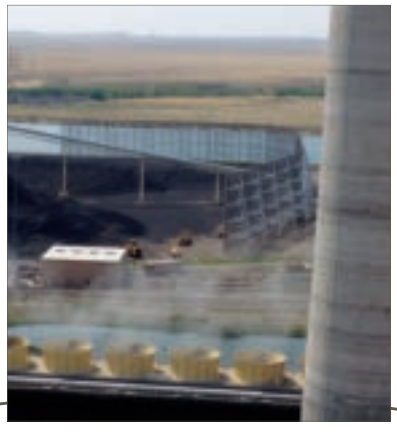


'A sincere and much-deserved thank you'

Dear Xcel Energy:

Thank you so very much for your extremely prompt response to our recent outage in Clovis, N.M. I remember calling the number to report the outage and a few minutes later, walked out the front door, saw the Xcel Energy truck rolling past.

Talk about prompt! Unbeatable.

The crews responded extremely fast. I even offered them a few beers, but they respectfully declined. I still want to give them some Paulaner, though, to show my appreciation.

Once again, thank you. We are in good hands with Xcel Energy.

The guy I spoke with said the transformer was probably on its way out, because for no reason, the lights in the house would flicker. I just thought it was other people's AC kicking on.

He said they were going to put a bigger transformer on, and I haven't noticed any flickering at all. It only took them about an hour to change out the smaller transformer to a bigger one.

Impressive. Thank you!

–Bill and Beth Latare, Cold Spring, Minn.

(Editor's Note: The employees who responded to this outage were: Jim Daly, foreman; Lonnie Bickham, Oran Stoner and Jon Hendrickson, servicemen.)

SHOCKING DISPLAY

Mark Hall (with hotstick), lineman journeyman; Russ Crandall, line working foreman; and Chris Koenig, lineman journeyman, recently performed an arcing demonstration at St. Mary's Catholic School in Amarillo. Xcel Energy crews also have traveled to several other locations to perform the arcing demonstrations. In this photo by Troy Foos, with Public Policy and External Affairs, the students' reactions on the left side of the photo speak to the drama of the event.

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

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ENGINEERING

Group monitors accuracy of energy-savings calculations related to DSM initiatives

The Energy Efficiency Engineering (EEE) team works hard to ensure the company's energy-conservation programs are effective and meet the expectations of customers and regulators.

The team, part of the Marketing organization, closely monitors the accuracy of energy-savings calculations related to the company's demand-side management (DSM) initiatives by carefully reviewing engineering studies, creating energy calculators, and developing savings estimates for DSM filings.

Helping customers save energy by being more efficient is important work. And in recent years, the department has been looking closely at its operations and exploring ways of doing the work more effectively and efficiently, said George Spargo, manager of Energy Efficiency Engineering. The team has since developed a series of new policies and procedures to improve its performance.

The results are impressive. Recent improvements have dramatically reduced job turnaround time and increased the number of projects handled annually, he said. In addition, the effort has helped the company achieve millions of dollars in earnings through DSM efforts, along with savings through increased efficiency of operations.

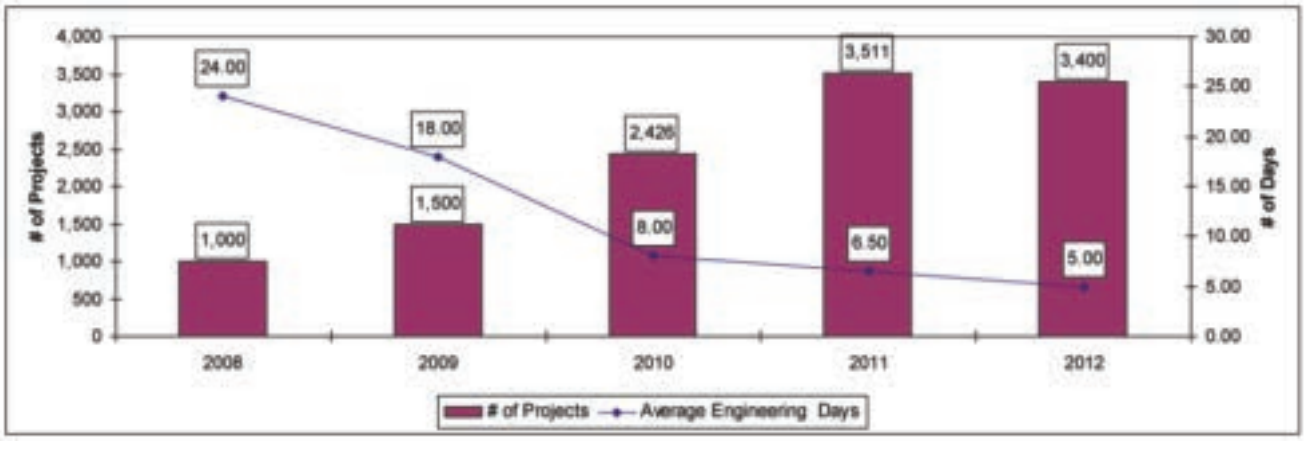
How did they do it?

"Prior to 2009, all projects were sent to a consultant for analysis and then sent back in-house for our review," Spargo said. "In 2009, however, we created the associate energy efficiency engineer (AEEE) position, and we were able to shift that work in-house. That allowed us to undertake a series of important process improvements that have been very effective."

One of those improvements involved the development of a database to track projects sent to the engineering team for analysis, said George Beatty, one of the group's AEEEs. This allowed EEE to closely monitor important details about the projects – the status of each project, the total number of completed projects, the size and complexity of projects, engineering turnaround times, and workloads of individual engineers.

"The tracking database has been valuable in helping us identify strengths and weaknesses in our team's performance, develop metrics, and set goals," Beatty said. "Using information in the database, we were able to develop a classification system for individual projects based on their size and complexity.

"Small, simple projects were allocated a shorter turnaround time than large complex projects," he explained.



"This allowed us to gauge the amount of effort new projects would require and prioritize our daily workloads based on the amount of time needed for each project."

Another positive change involved creating a new strategy for assigning employee sign-off authority for stages of projects. The various staff levels in EEE were each assigned a minimum and maximum sign-off level, based on the size and type of project.

Projects above an employee's sign-off level require additional review by the next level up. But the system allows engineers to increase their sign-off authority level if they can demonstrate increased competency.

As engineers increase their sign-off levels, reducing the need for additional review, the workload of senior staff and turnaround times for reviews are both reduced. This new system also established a path for career growth and development for engineers.

"As engineers gain competency in their respective areas, they are able to cross-train and gain competency in new areas," Beatty said. "This has added to our group's overall knowledge base and flexibility. As a result, we are able to distribute workloads better and reduce our groups average turnaround time."

The EEE team's work on reducing engineering turnaround time has paid off. Over the past few years, EEE has reduced its average turnaround time from 24 days per project to just three days, he said. At the same time, its workload has increased from 1,000 projects in 2008 to a projected 3,400 in 2012.

In addition, since the process improvements were initiated, EEE has met and exceeded increasing energy-efficiency achievement goals. And the EEE team has achieved improvements in the overall quality of work being done.

"Our improvement in work quality is best illustrated by the number of projects rejected after being audited," Beatty said. "For example, in Minnesota, the Department of Energy Resources (DER) – the entity that regulates DSM efforts, has not rejected a single project in the last six years.

"This allows Xcel Energy to gain the trust of our regulators and customers, as well as establishes our credibility in the industry and with third parties that also evaluate our work," he said. "When you combine the efforts of EEE, program management and account management, the result has been an improved experience for the customer and a better product from Xcel Energy."

The steps taken also have given EEE employees opportunities to grow and develop as engineers. Entry level engineers are learning from experienced engineers, and all engineers are able to increase their areas of expertise.

"A group structure that was previously flat has transformed into a structure with vertical mobility and mechanisms that recognize and reward engineers as they increase their competency and skill sets," Beatty said.

All of these improvements have brought significant financial benefits, as well.

"All of our solutions have been developed in-house," he said. "The fact that we perform this work in-house allows us to continually strive to do things better and more efficiently to help our customers.

"Our team leaders have done a great job of soliciting feedback on how we can improve our processes," he said. "The results are impressive and show what a group of motivated, results-oriented individuals can accomplish when presented with a challenge."

NEWS BRIEFS

10 million safe work hours milestone reached

Xcel Energy recently hit its goal, set out at the beginning of the year, to collectively reach 10 million safe work hours.

Employees collectively accumulated nearly 10.3 million work hours without an OSHA-recordable injury at the end of August, said Paul Jeske, director of Safety.

"Our employees rose to the challenge and reached this milestone way ahead of expectations," Jeske said. "This milestone represents a company-wide effort and demonstrates our employees' commitment to working safely, day in and day out."

According to safety reports, other impressive safety-performance results through August include:

- 233 individual work groups, representing 75 percent of the company, had not recorded an employee injury this year and were achieving the Journey To Zero.
- 121 OSHA recordable injuries had been reported at Xcel Energy. This represents an overall decrease of 19 percent when compared to the 150 injuries recorded for the same time period last year.
- Sprains and strains, which historically are Xcel Energy's most common injury type, had been reduced by 16 percent.
- The company's "Safety Intervention and Stop Work Responsibility" program, which encourages employees to take personal responsibility for their safety by speaking up if they have a concern or question, continues to be a focus.

To help maintain momentum, a new stretch goal was announced for the remainder of the year, Jeske said, with a focus on consecutive days without injuries. The company is striving for 15 consecutive days without an injury (company-wide) before the end of the year.

"This 15-day stretch would represent one million consecutive work hours, which would be a significant accomplishment," Jeske said. "For this to happen, we need each employee, every day, to stay focused and be diligent in working safely and watching out for each other.

"It's an opportunity for each of us to contribute to our Journey To Zero where every employee goes home safe and injury-free every day," he added.

Fall and winter have traditionally been challenging from a safety perspective due to changing weather conditions and shorter daylight hours.

"We are confident that with a concerted and renewed effort, our employees will continue to make a difference and finish the year out strong," Jeske said.

Comanche Wind Fence

No high-emission events recorded since fence was installed

A 10-story-tall wind fence now wraps part of the coal yard at Comanche Generating Station – a major component of an integrated fugitive dust control plan at the Pueblo, Colo., plant.

The unique project got under way last spring to help combat a reoccurring problem of dust blowing from coal-handling operations and off plant property. Comanche Station receives up to 8 million tons of coal a year, and its coal pile occupies 10 acres and sits in an open, exposed area that frequently experiences windy conditions.

Since the installation of the massive 1,700-foot-long fence – nearly a third of a mile – no excess dust emissions have occurred, said Fred Prutch, plant director at Comanche. The air-particle monitor onsite, which measures the amount of dust in the air, has recorded no high-emission events since the fence was installed.

Prior to installing the wind fence, the plant took other steps to suppress coal dust, including enclosing coal-unloading operations, spraying the coal with water and dust-suppression chemicals, sealing the inactive coal pile, and minimizing coal handling during high winds. All of these measures were part of the plant's integrated fugitive dust control plan, he said.

"Wind fencing had been proven to control fugitive dust under similar conditions at other facilities around the country, so it was chosen as the most effective solution for Comanche, as well," Prutch said. "The results so far have been promising, and we expect continued improved air quality, which is good for the environment and our neighbors near the plant."

The fence is made of a mesh screen, and the project cost about $4 million. The factory-tested fence is estimated to last 20 years, according to the manufacturer. It was constructed around the coal pile to reduce the speed of the wind blowing through the coal yard.

The fence is situated upwind of the coal pile in the path of the prevailing wind direction. It acts as a barrier to the wind, reducing wind speed by 50 percent, which decreases the amount of fugitive dust that is blown from the coal yard. Winds from the southwest can be particularly troublesome for the plant's dust-mitigation efforts, especially during windy periods that occur in the spring and fall months.

"We recognized the need for additional dust control measures at the plant," said Gary Magno, manager of Environmental Services. "It is part of our ongoing air-compliance obligation and responsibility as a good neighbor."

The fence was the most unobtrusive, effective and economical solution, he said. The Colorado Air Pollution Control Division agreed and included the installation of the wind fence in the company's site air quality permit.

As part of the Comanche Unit Three project, which added a new unit at the facility, the company was required to install an air-monitoring system to measure particulate matter. The monitor, located along the plant's eastern fence line, mea-

sures particulate matter concentrations in the air. All episodes of elevated emissions prior to the installation of the fence were associated with high wind events, he said, ranging from 25 to 50 miles per hour.

"We worked with Comanche and Engineering and Construction, and sought ways to reduce dust emissions from coal handling and storage operations, including installing a wind fence," Magno said.

The fence is not your typical variety and is made of an engineered fabric that knocks down the wind. While this type of fencing is installed in other locations across the country, Comanche's wind fence is the first of this magnitude, he added.

"We'd like to send kudos to the folks at the plant, who have stayed on top of the fugitive-dust issue and completed a number of different mitigation efforts," he said. "It's been a big challenge for everyone involved."

COMANCHE FENCE

The new factory-tested fence at Comanche Generating Station in Pueblo, Colo., is made of a mesh screen and is estimated to last 20 years. It was constructed around the coal pile to reduce the speed of the wind blowing through the coal yard and is situated upwind of the coal pile in the path of the prevailing wind direction.

Panhandle Boost

More than $90 million in new and upgraded transmission lines now in service

Xcel Energy has spent $93.3 million completing high-voltage transmission line projects that are boosting reliability and capacity in the northwestern counties of the Texas Panhandle, where local communities and industries had outgrown the existing transmission infrastructure.

"We've seen tremendous economic growth in Dalhart, Dumas, Stratford and neighboring communities where local economies are being lifted by agriculture and energy-related industries," said Riley Hill, president and CEO of SPS. "The upgrades will allow these industries and the communities that sustain them to continue expanding as they take advantage of reliable, plentiful and low-cost power."

These and other transmission enhancement projects across the region were identified as necessary improvements in a 2010 study by the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), the regional transmission organization that coordinates reliability on the transmission system serving portions of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana.

SPP identifies areas of improvement and issues notices to construct. Xcel Energy's policy is to accept these notices to build and own new lines within its existing transmission footprint. The overall effort is called Power for the Plains.

Xcel Energy serves close to 100 communities in the Panhandle and South Plains of Texas, and eastern and southeastern New Mexico. The company's transmission system reaches even farther, taking in the Oklahoma Panhandle and portions of southwestern Kansas. The company will spend more than $2 billion upgrading generation, transmission and distribution facilities in almost every part of this area.

Northwestern Texas Panhandle upgrades include:

- A new 230-kilovolt transmission line made up of two segments with a combined length of 75 miles. The new line provides sustained reliable electric service to the growing load base of Channing, and the surrounding rural areas between Channing and the communities of Dalhart and Dumas. The line also improves transmission reliability and capacity to Dallam, Hartley and Moore counties. The two segments are constructed at 230 kilovolts but will initially be operated at 115 kilovolts.
- A new Dallam-to-Sherman-to-Hitchland 115-kilovolt transmission line enhances electric reliability to the existing and growing loads in Dallam and Sherman counties. Over the last eight years, the electrical load in the area has increased by nearly 24 percent, with an average annual load growth rate of 2.78 percent.
- The recently completed Hitchland-to-Moore 230-kilovolt transmission line that serves load growth in the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandle areas. The route runs 62 miles between the Hitchland Substation in the north-central Texas Panhandle area to the Moore County Substation near Dumas. This line is improving electric reliability in the area by providing a second 230-kilovolt source to the Moore County Substation.

NEWS BRIEF

Ben Fowke speaks with Amarillo and Nuclear employees


Ben Fowke

Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO, recently hosted a session with employees at the SPS Tower in Amarillo before an SPS operating company board meeting.

Fowke spoke about much needed infrastructure investments in the face of challenges such as unseasonable weather and flat sales in most jurisdictions, with SPS being the exception. SPS is seeing rapid growth in its territory primarily thanks to the oil and gas industry.

About aging infrastructure, Fowke said, "We want to be sure and take care of our customers. Most of our infrastructure was built in the 1960s and needs to be updated."

In the coming months, rate cases will be filed throughout the company's territories as upgrades and investments continue in transmission, distribution and generation. Updating current technology throughout the company also is a priority, Fowke noted.

"We know how to build power plants, but we've encountered issues in the past with technology system changes," Fowke said.

The system will be updated, but changes must be thoroughly vetted and accompanied with the necessary training for successful, safe implementation, he said.

Fowke also praised SPS's contribution to Xcel Energy's bottom line this year, with the operating company much closer to its authorized return on equity – a little more than 10 percent.

Fielding employee questions, Fowke characterized the effort of Texas and New Mexico power plant employees as "nothing short of phenomenal" in the face of challenges that come with an aging fleet as they resolve issues quickly in "heroic" fashion.

In addition, Fowke also recently assured employee audiences in Minneapolis, and at Monticello and Prairie Island nuclear generating plants, that the company is committed to nuclear and will be increasing its investment in the plants.

Fowke met with a group of Prairie Island employees and the site's leadership team, and with Monticello managers and supervisors. He was accompanied by Tim O'Connor, acting chief nuclear officer.

On both visits, Fowke emphasized the company's vision is for nuclear to play a prominent role in a diverse energy portfolio.

"The company needs nuclear in its mix for a healthy balance, now and in the future, to create stability as market trends change," Fowke said. "We will put more funding into nuclear operations in the upcoming rate case."

During his two-day nuclear visits, Fowke said he was confident that Monticello can return to a top rating in its next industry evaluation, and that Prairie Island can get its momentum back to again become a top performer.

Fowke also shared some of his concerns, which include:

- Creating a culture that prevents injuries. Fowke said he does not want to see any employee injured on the job.
- Ensuring the rate relief needed to provide clean, reliable and safe energy.
- Meeting challenges posed by public policy through the regulatory and legislative process.

Fowke added that Xcel Energy continues to be in a strong position financially and operationally.

IRWA recognizes Xcel Energy and CapX2020 efforts

The International Right of Way Association (IRWA) recently named the CapX2020 345-kilovolt projects in Minnesota and Xcel Energy's Tyrone Land Management Project in Wisconsin as two of the top 10 projects of 2012. Each year, the IRWA recognizes the top 10 projects in the country.

"This is tremendous recognition of our effective, open and transparent stakeholder engagement approach to siting," said Teresa Mogensen, vice president of Transmission.

The CapX2020 application focused on the unique challenges of right-of-way acquisition with one of the country's largest transmission expansion initiatives that impacts thousands of landowners. The Tyrone project application focused on Xcel Energy's successful work to transition the proposed nuclear plant site to "Land Conservationists of the Year."

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region, including Xcel Energy, to expand the electric transmission grid to ensure reliable and affordable service. The CapX2020 utilities include cooperatives and investor-owned and municipal utilities.

In October, IRWA launched a publicity campaign in conjunction with International Right of Way Month magazine. The campaign includes a news release and editorial coverage of the top 10 projects in the November/December of the IRWA magazine.

Generation Operating Model Playbook

Document meets goal of completing work uniformly across the fleet

Energy Supply's Playbook creates a solid framework around the idea of, "This is the way we do business."

Based on the business area's Operating Model, the document drives standardization and helps meet Energy Supply's goal of completing work uniformly across the fleet.

"The Playbook is an outline of how we do business," said Steve Mills, vice president of Operations. "It helps us leverage knowledge and expertise across the entire organization.

"With the turnover we face due to retirements in the coming years, having knowledge walk out the door is a potential problem," he added. "The Playbook will help us with training and passing on that key knowledge to the next generation of workers."

The Operating Model Playbook is a 58-page document that covers broad topics such as unit operation, work management, performance measures, and roles and responsibilities. It contains the principles the company follows to manage, operate and maintain its generating assets.

"The Playbook helps ease internal competition in Energy Supply," Mills said. "Everyone wants to be the best – be it NSP, SPS or PSCo. But the idea is to continue improving our operations across the board in a uniform fashion and compete externally in the utility industry."

Work on the Playbook began when representatives from various departments examined virtually every aspect of the organization – everything from tools to responsibilities and goals to strategies.

It continued with an extensive benchmarking effort early last year. A core group of employees visited a number of utilities and independent power producers, including AEP, Calpine, Duke Energy and Southern Company.

"We wanted to visit high-performing companies to see what they were doing, and meet with them face-to-face to gather specific information about their successful operations," Mills said. "We found that many had created a global direction for their fleet, complete with expectations and descriptions of how to perform work such as engineering, planning and overhauls."

Many of the companies had guidelines in place, along

with documented standard operating procedures. Many had created their own "GE Way," he said, and the benchmarking work sent Xcel Energy down a path to create its own version.

That work got under way last spring and summer with the development of the Playbook. The core group then presented its work to Energy Supply leadership and the Playbook was released last fall.

"The idea is to document what is expected in terms of work, and how to go about it," Mills said. "We wanted to keep it fairly short and not make it overwhelming, but many more details are then documented through links provided in the online version."

The Playbook is now changing the way Xcel Energy goes about its generation business. And although this change is not always easy, it will lead to a much stronger organization, Mills said.

"Before, we were operating as three different operating companies too much of the time," he said. "With the mergers, we had let people continue their operations as they had done before.

"But now the idea is to adopt best practices, change the way we operate and standardize the way we do business across the board," he added. "We want to leverage all of our knowledge and experience, and achieve better results through common practices."

One of those changes now involves a centralized engineering group, working as one unit instead of a series of groups working at individual power plants. Another involves overhaul management for generating units, with common practices set in place for all plants, be they in Texas, Minnesota or Colorado.

"We now have a common overhaul-management group creating a standard system and related processes," Mills said. "Before, each plant tended to perform their overhauls on their own."

Energy Supply also has adopted a common IPAD template for performance evaluations, he said, in part tying to performance issues such as reliability, safety, budget and environmental performance.

"Everyone now has skin in the game," he said. "We've laid out a framework and identified issues and are moving forward to get the best product possible."

Although the new effort initially created a large number of meetings and communications, Mills said that is now smoothing out and getting easier. The effort has required a lot of adjustment, he added, and more lies ahead.

To that end, however, an oversight group is measuring and monitoring progress of the effort. And the list of processes being standardized continues to grow.

"Once you have a 10-step process in place, for instance, it's much easier to change one of those steps as needed to create more improvement," Mills said. "Revisions and adjustments will continue to be made as we perfect our processes and systems.

"In the end, we'll continue to grow smarter," he added. "And we will become much more efficient and effective as an organization."

OPERATING MODEL

The Playbook is an outline of how Energy Supply does business, and helps the business area leverage knowledge and expertise across the entire organization. Pictured on pages 10 and 11 is Sherco Generating Station in Becker, Minn., and above is a portion of the coal-handling operations at the plant.

Days of Service and Caring

Employees pitch in across service territory to help communities

More than 1,800 employees and family members recently joined together on different Saturdays in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado and the Dakotas as part of the company's 2012 Day of Caring and Day of Service.

In Minnesota, more than two dozen nonprofit organizations and other entities benefitted from employee Day of Caring volunteer efforts. In 2011 alone, employees in Minnesota volunteered more than 20,000 hours of their time to help individuals and organizations across the state.

"Xcel Energy employees are dedicated to giving back to the communities we serve, and our first annual Day of Caring provided us with a large-scale opportunity to help many organizations," said Judy Poferl, president and CEO of NSP-Minnesota. "Coming together like this for a day allows us to make an even more focused, positive impact on our communities."

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman both proclaimed Sept. 22 to be Xcel Energy Day of Caring in their respective cities. Volunteer projects took place at nonprofit organizations throughout the Twin Cities area, as well as in Mankato, Rogers, Red Wing, Monticello, and in South Dakota and North Dakota.

Volunteers took part in 24 different projects. Projects ran the gamut from preparing the red kettles for the Salvation Army's Christmas fundraising, moving and laying gravel for the Minnesota Raptor Center's bird cages, and removing buckthorn from parks to painting the gym at Neighborhood House.

"Our first Day of Caring is really a big 'thank you' to our

communities," Poferl said. "And thanks to everyone who participated and worked so hard to make this day happen – the work we did will benefit many for a long time."

The Day of Caring wrapped up with a lunch at Centre Pointe in Roseville, Minn., where volunteers connected and shared stories about their morning experiences. Volunteers at outstate locations, and in North Dakota and South Dakota, also celebrated at their venues.

In Wisconsin, more than 60 employees participated in the local United Way's annual Day of Caring. The volunteers took on renovation work for a new Boys & Girls Club in Chippewa Falls. The volunteers worked on removing a divider wall, scraping and painting trim around the windows, painting several rooms and landscaping.

> "Our first Day of Caring is really a big 'thank you' to our communities, and thanks to every one who participated and worked so hard to make this day happen – the work we did will benefit many for a long time."

And in Colorado, another large group of volunteers and family members helped 41 different nonprofits on Sept. 8. as part of the company's second annual Day of Service. The event honored the victims and first responders on the 11th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"Volunteers contributed 5,625 hours of community service by painting, cleaning, sorting, planting, organizing, distributing and helping," said David Eves, president and CEO of PSCo. "This translates into a total value of $123,750 to these deserving nonprofits. The day also demonstrated that when we all come together, we can truly make a difference in the communities we serve."

This year's Day of Service linked directly to the company's support of the 125th anniversary of the United Way,

VOLUNTEERISM

Hundreds of employees recently joined together on different Saturdays in numerous states as part of the company's 2012 Day of Caring and Day of Service. Pictured above, Helen Pscholka, risk management analyst, seals a box during a Colorado project. On page 13, a volunteer puts the finishing touches on a planting, and on page 14, various groups of employees in Wisconsin, Colorado and Minnesota tackle projects during the Saturday events.

which began in Denver. To mark the occasion, Xcel Energy provided 1,250 volunteers for its 2012 Day of Service.

Colorado projects included:

- Volunteers helping The Boys and Girls Club in Denver celebrate family day with games, activities and a picnic.
- Volunteers packaging medical supplies to be shipped around the world at Project Cure in Centennial, Colo.
- Nearly 80 volunteers packing food boxes at the Food Bank of the Rockies.
- And 100 volunteers planting the Sand Creek Regional wetland in Aurora.

A barbecue celebration was held at Denver's Lipan Distribution Center after volunteers finished up work to thank them and mark the kickoff of Colorado's annual United Way campaign. At the barbecue, a proclamation from Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper was read, proclaiming Sept. 8 as "Xcel Energy Day of Service" in the state.

Wildland Firefighting

Sperlak's firefighting skills leave him well prepared for many situations

Where there's smoke there's fire, as the saying goes. And hopefully, people like Frank Sperlak are soon on the scene.

Sperlak, fire protection coordinator at Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant in Red Wing, Minn., has a diverse skill set that leaves him prepared for fire-related situations and emergencies – everything from structural fires to wildfires.

Sperlak's work at Prairie Island involves preventing fires from happening at the plant, and dealing with them quickly and effectively if they do.

"We always have at least a five-person fire brigade on hand at all times, and I run the required fire drills, as well as maintain the equipment," Sperlak said. "I also do various fire inspections in the plant and help manage our Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program, as well as work with outside organizations such as local fire departments, medical facilities, insurance auditors and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission."

When he's not working with fire-related and safety issues at the company, Sperlak works as an on-call firefighter for the City of Red Wing, where he also serves as the captain of the Hook and Ladder Company. His involvement in emergency-response work started with a training course as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) back in 1993 at Prairie Island.

"The next year I saw a posting in the local newspaper for volunteer firefighters," Sperlak explained. "I was interested in the community service aspect of the job, and now 18 years later, I am still a firefighter in Red Wing and am also still an EMT."

Over the years, Sperlak has continued developing his skills and widening his experience through ongoing training and fighting fires in a wide range of conditions. Most recently,

he underwent special training in Canada as a wildland firefighter, which involved specialized equipment and helicopters.

The Minnesota State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has an agreement with Manitoba, Canada, for fire assistance as needed. Sperlak and 40 other Minnesota DNR firefighter "smoke chasers," responded to the extremely dry conditions in the region last summer. A smoke chaser is an intermittent or seasonal DNR position that consists of irregular and short-term work during high fire-danger periods.

Wildland firefighters work under arduous and stressful conditions such as heavy smoke and intense heat, climbing steep and rugged terrain, working in a dirty environment with minimal sleep or rest, and carrying heavy packs and equipment. Showers and hot meals are not generally available, and firefighters can be called to work for weeks at a time.

"Structural firefighting is quite different from wildland firefighting," he explained. "Structural firefighting is like a sprint, where wildland firefighting is like a distance race."

During his experience in Canada this past summer – where he took PTO – Sperlak obtained firsthand experience with the considerable challenges involved in wildland firefighting. Along with other Minnesota firefighters, he joined a four-person crew that was flown in by helicopter to a 1,500-acre fire in northern Manitoba. Besides being a firefighter, Sperlak served as an EMT, as well.

The crew was dropped off in a swamp with their equipment and provisions, and made camp on an island near the swamp in the burn area, which became their home for the next two weeks. Every few days, food and additional equipment as needed were dropped to the crew.

The crew secured and maintained a mile-long fire line, using about two miles of fire hose. They pumped water from a beaver pond in the swamp to fight the fire, working 14 to 16 hours each day. The crew also cut trees to build a boardwalk across the swamp and made a pad for the helicopters to land safely.

"My firefighting experience in Canada was an eye-opening experience," Sperlak said. "The first few days were hectic, and it sounded like a scene out of a war movie, with helicopters constantly flying overhead and dropping water on the fire. Even at the end of the two weeks, we continued to battle hot spots that seemed to pop up everywhere.

"It's a difficult job and you are dirty all the time," he added. "You work long hours and are usually always tired. But the people you meet and work with are the best, and you work together to make the best of it. It was quite the challenge and probably one of the hardest things I've ever done, but also one of the most rewarding."

Sperlak spent two weeks fighting one relatively small fire, but he noted there are men and women who do that difficult and dangerous work on a daily basis. This was especially true this year, when there was a larger than normal amount of wildfires across the country.

"They come back every year and do it again," he said. "They are the real heroes. They leave their family and friends for weeks at a time and put their lives on the line."

CANADIAN FIREFIGHTING

Over the years, Prairie Island's Frank Sperlak has developed his skills and widened his experience through ongoing training and fighting fires in a wide range of conditions. Most recently, he underwent special training in Canada as a wildland firefighter, which involved specialized equipment and helicopters. Pictured above is one of the helicopters taking off and Sperlak at work fighting the fire in the woods of Manitoba.

FRIENDS WE'LL MISS

Steven W. Anderson
62, troubleman, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Sept. 1, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1970 to 2006.

Howard C. Bacon
46, distribution dispatcher, Lubbock Operations Center, Lubbock, Texas, died on Sept. 28, 2012. He worked for SPS from 1992 to 2012.

Richard A. Gamradt
78, senior property tax analyst, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Sept. 22, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1967 to 1998.

Robert Gramadzki
81, operator mechanic, Colorado, died on Aug. 23, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1974 to 1996.

Wilbur D. Harr
93, recording meters supervisor, Electric Distribution, Colorado, died on Sept. 4, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1940 to 1982.

Brian M. Hickey
53, IT project manager, Denver, Colo., died on Aug. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy from 1998 to 2012.

Paul J. Huberty
82, line crew foreman, Overhead Construction, Chestnut Service Center, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Sept. 26, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1948 to 1988.

David G. Kehr
93, customer account clerk, western district office, Colorado, died on Sept. 1, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1951 to 1979.

Edward A. Magnuson
82, transfer agent, Shareholders, General Office, Minneapolis, Minn., died on Aug. 11, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1956 to 1988.

Douglas W. Massey
81, division engineering technician, General Engineering, Plainview, Texas, died on Sept. 5, 2012. He worked for SPS from 1962 to 1993.

Clara F. McGehee
82, died on June 22, 2012. She worked for SPS from 1972 to 1995.

Edwin A. Millerbernd
78, gas pressure foreman, Rice Street Service Center, St. Paul, Minn., died on Sept. 24, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1952 to 1992.

Donald L. Myers
84, trouble repairman, Electric Construction, Mountain Division, Colorado, died on Sept. 9, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1947 to 1986.

Everett W. Patterson
88, died on Sept. 11, 2012. He worked for SPS from 1945 to 1986.

John A. Roller
75, supervisor, Employee Services, Colorado, died on Sept. 18, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1962 to 1992.

Elsie Schwab
81, specialist customer service, Colorado, died on Sept. 11, 2012. She worked for PSCo from 1953 to 1993.

Howard K. Smith
83, classified mechanic, Alamosa Steam Plant, Alamosa, Colo., died on Sept. 19, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1957 to 1986.

Edward L. Swart
91, shift supervisor, died on Sept. 21, 2012. He worked for PSCo from 1952 to 1984.

Benjamin O. Theissen
92, plant superintendent, Wilmarth Plant, Mankato, Minn., died on Sept. 13, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1948 to 1982.

Roland R. Warnke
82, coordinator, Plant Accounting, died on Aug. 29, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1956 to 1988.

Marvin A. Wolf
87, meter reader specialist, Lakeland, Minn., died on Sept. 6, 2012. He worked for NSP from 1947 to 1987.

RETIRING

Ken Fortunato
(ken_tuna4@hotmail.com), designer, North Metro Engineering, Arvada, Colo., retired Sept. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 42 years.

Santos R. Guzman
electrician specialist, Electric Shop, Pawnee Generating Station, Brush, Colo., retired on Nov. 16, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

Gene Heitzman
field operator, High Pressure Gas, Brighton Service Center, Brighton, Colo., retired on Nov. 30, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

Patrick Hennessy
(northernhen@yahoo.com), designer, Ashland, Wis., retired on Oct. 1, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 30 years.

William (Bill) Hiner
(billdhiner@att.net), system operator, Amarillo, Texas, retired on Sept. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

Stan Langowski
foreman, Substations, Winona, Minn., retired on Sept. 7, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Michael Lundin
senior corrosion control specialist, Menomonie, Wis., retired on Oct. 1, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Nicholas J. Lawlor
lead service fitter, Gas Control Equipment, Denver, Colo., retired on Oct. 12, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Pedro Martinez
lineman troubleman, Electric Trouble Dept., Denver, retired on Sept. 14, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 35 years.

Ray McDonald
painter, Fleet, Lipan Distribution Center, Denver, Colo., retired on Nov. 30, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 36 years.

Paul Moore
(pauldmoore@comacast.net), senior workforce relations consultant, Workforce Relations, 1800 Larimer, Denver, Colo., retired on Oct. 12, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 20 years.

Dan Orr
(danorr99@gmail.com), environmental analyst, Environmental Policy & Services, Sherco Plant, Becker, Minn., retired on Oct. 15, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 28 years.

Earl O'Steen
(earlosteen@gmail.com), substation foreman, Borger, Texas, retired on Sept. 28, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 39 years.

Harold Paustian
(haroldpaustian@gmail.com), principal engineer, Systems Engineering, Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant, Monticello, Minn., retired on Sept. 7, 2012. He worked for the Xcel Energy for 24 years.

Ivan Patrick
Smith, mechanic specialist, Maintenance, Comanche Generating Station, Pueblo, Colo., retired on Oct. 31, 2012. He worked for Xcel Energy for 37 years.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Tammy Hallum
gas standards specialist, Pipeline Compliance and Standards, Rice Street, St. Paul, Minn., received her associate of Arts with a foundation of Business degree from the University of Phoenix on May 27, 2012.

Mary Butts
Transmission Project Controls, Marquette Plaza, Minneapolis, Minn., was awarded her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification by the Project Management Institute (PMI) on Sept. 8, 2012.

Dustin Eiland
Transmission Line Engineering, Amarillo, Texas, received his masters of Global Energy Marketing degree from the University of Colorado (Denver).

The following employees in the Substation/Transmission Engineering & Design organization recently obtained their registration as Professional Engineers (P.E.): **Andrew Arndt**, P.E. (System Protection Engineering, Minneapolis); **Scott Elling**, P.E. (Substation Design Engineering, Minneapolis); **Jonathan Johnson**, P.E. (Transmission Line Engineering, Denver); **JV Kelley**, P.E. (System Protection Engineering, Amarillo; **Mark Lavanish**, P.E. (Substation Design Engineering, Denver); **Chad Schell**, P.E. (Substation Design Engineering, Denver); **Sean Xiao**, P.E. (Substation Design Engineering, Minneapolis).

The following employees in Substation/Transmission Engineering & Design organization recently passed their Fundamentals of Engineering (F.E.) or Engineer-In-Training (E.I.T.) exams: **Shannon Bellinghausen**, F.E./E.I.T. (System Protection Engineering, Amarillo); **Julian Rizo**, F.E./E.I.T. (Substation Design Engineering, Denver); **Jonathan Turnquist**, F.E./E.I.T. (System Protection Engineering, Minneapolis); **Jonathan Weber**, F.E./E.I.T. (Substation Design Engineering, Denver.

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.

AROUND THE COMPANY

Third quarter 2012 financial results announced

Xcel Energy recently reported 2012 third quarter GAAP earnings of $398 million, or $0.81 per share compared with 2011 GAAP earnings of $338 million, or $0.69 per share.

Ongoing earnings, which exclude adjustments for certain items, were $0.78 per share for the third quarter of 2012 compared with $0.69 per share in 2011.

Third quarter 2012 ongoing earnings increased largely due to increased electric and gas margins, driven by various rate increases that went into effect in 2012 and partially offset by increased property taxes and interest expense.

Third quarter 2012 GAAP earnings also reflect a $0.03 per share positive impact for a tax benefit associated with federal subsidies for prescription drug plans.

"We experienced a solid quarter, with earnings increasing mainly due to both our continued system investments that provide long-term value to our customers and timely cost recovery," said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO. "Our third quarter 2012 results also benefited from hot summer weather. Although we experienced similar weather in 2011, it was not a variance driver in the period-over-period quarterly comparison.

"We had a slow start to the year with unfavorable sales, mild winter weather and certain adverse regulatory decisions," he added. "We responded by implementing cost-control measures to partially offset the impact of these early headwinds and to position the company to deliver earnings in the lower half of our guidance range.

"Given the success of our year-to-date cost-control measures, combined with hot summer weather, we now expect to deliver 2012 ongoing earnings within our earnings guidance range of $1.75 to $1.85 per share," Fowke said. "We also anticipate that our 2012 GAAP earnings will be in the upper half of our guidance range."

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