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Reliable Energy Moves Us Forward

Having a reliable energy supply is more than just a convenience. It's a necessity. Our economy—and our way of life—depend on it. For consumers, reliability means knowing the lights and heat will come on when they flip the switch. For Minnesota's investor owned electric and natural gas utilities, that provide service to nearly 75% of Minnesota's families and businesses, maintaining a high level of reliability requires constant commitment.

The North American electrical system and natural gas network is a complex interconnected system of generation, transmission, and distribution systems. The structure of the electric and natural gas infrastructure helps to make reliability possible, but what makes it a reality is the coordination in operations of the electric and gas companies that make up this network.

As an example, investor owned electric utilities like Minnesota Power, Xcel Energy and Otter Tail Power have been strategic partners in the investment of reliable and affordable electric infrastructure through the CapX2020 initiative, a joint venture of 11 utilities in Midwest who have built more than 700 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines, providing a new backbone of regional reliability.

The University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs recently published a paper "Planning and CapX2020; Building trust to build regional transmission systems" detailing the significance of this collaborative effort in ensuring reliability and safety in our electric grid.

The "heroic efforts" of the CapX2020 group "set a precedent for the way coordinated development, permitting, and construction of new high-voltage transmission lines should be done," the paper reports. "It will serve as a successful example that other regional groups can follow."

Minnesota's investor owned utilities work diligently to enhance the nation's electric grid and natural gas network to improve reliability. Enhancing and strengthening this infrastructure with smart technologies helps consumers to better manage their energy usage. This technology also allows investor owned utilities to more proactively identify and address problems that may impact our homes and businesses.

Investor owned natural gas utilities like CenterPoint Energy, Xcel Energy and Minnesota Energy Resources Corp. (MERC) regularly monitor their pipes to ensure their integrity and follow a plan to upgrade aging equipment to ensure reliable service. There are over 31,000 miles of pipe maintained in Minnesota to ensure reliability and safety... that's enough pipe to go around the entire earth, just in our state.

Minnesota's investor owned utilities have proven over the past century and a half their ability to provide reliable, affordable and safe energy to the communities they serve. As technology advances and customer needs evolve these utilities remain committed to ensuring that reliability remains the backbone of providing a service that we all so vitally depend upon.

Energy Minnesota is an initiative of Minnesota's investor owned electric and natural gas utilities. The privately run, investor-owned utilities in Minnesota deliver safe, reliable and affordable energy 24/7/365. This track record of performance has been ongoing for nearly a century and a half. Energy Minnesota strives to inform and educate customers, businesses, community leaders and public policymakers and to foster well-informed public policy. Learn more at www.energyminnesota.org.