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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minnesota's Investor-Owned Utilities Put Your Safety First

Safety for both the public and employees is a top priority for the privately run, investor-owned natural gas and electric utilities in Minnesota. These companies work tirelessly every day to keep the public aware of the importance of utility safety while also ensuring that every employee can return home safely to their families each day.

In order to keep the public safe, Minnesota's investor-owned utilities must first instill a culture of safety on the job. Every one of these companies constantly strives to keep their employees safe through safety education, safe work practices and communication with the goal of zero injuries, accidents or incidents on the job and at home.

For example, [Otter Tail Power](#) "established a formal safety department in 1949, one of the nation's first among electric utilities," according to Eric Hamm, Safety Services Manager. The company has consistently received awards from safety councils in the states it serves for exceptional workplace safety performance. CenterPoint Energy's statement on safety says, "We will perform our duties safely or we won't do them." This black and white commitment to employee safety is a consistent and common theme throughout all of Minnesota's investor-owned utilities.

One of the most important safety resources that all of Minnesota's investor-owned utilities strive to make known to the public is 811, the national one call number the public should call before any digging project - large or small. Calling this number will route the public to [Gopher State One Call](#), Minnesota's local one call center, who then sends out each affected utility within two working days based on the location of the digging. "CenterPoint Energy and other utilities spend millions of dollars annually to enhance the safety and reliability of our underground utility lines in the communities we serve. The public can do their part by calling 811 before every digging project," said Joe Berry, manager of Underground Locating for [CenterPoint Energy](#). "When a call is made to 811, 99 percent of the time there is no damage to vital underground utility lines."

In fact, on Aug. 13th, two of Minnesota's investor-owned utilities are sponsoring the [811 Run/Walk](#) and safety fair around Lake Calhoun to promote awareness of safe digging practices. One call can prevent damage to underground utilities. All proceeds from the 811 Run will go to Twin Cities Firefighters Operation Warm, an organization that provides warm winter coats to children in need.

In 2015, [Xcel Energy](#) added to its safety effort by placing more than 162,000 pieces of energy safety material directly into classrooms. These safety materials help educators meet national science education curriculum standards, and a related [e-SMART website](#) continues to be a valuable educational resource, as demonstrated by nearly 14,000 website visits in 2015 alone.

Since third-party damage is a top cause of utility incidents, Minnesota's investor-owned utilities continue to enhance public safety through making direct outreach a priority. "Year to date, we've targeted professional excavators by delivering over 60 formal presentations, giving 49 field safety discussions and made more than 200 phone calls to discuss safe excavation practices and what to do in case of an emergency," said Alicia Berger, manager of damage prevention, Xcel Energy.

For Minnesota's investor-owned utilities, keeping the public safe also means keeping up with advanced technologies that further enhance the safety of electrical and natural gas infrastructure. As an example, at the end of last year, CenterPoint Energy completed a critical phase in an ongoing project to replace and rehabilitate the 73-mile natural gas pipeline that serves hundreds of thousands of customers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. "Over the past 30 years, CenterPoint Energy has replaced approximately 95 percent of its cast iron pipe and will achieve full replacement by the end of 2018," said John Wiinamaki, Director of Engineering for CenterPoint Energy.

For over 145 years, Minnesota's investor-owned utilities have stayed committed to safety for both their employees and the public. These utilities will continue to keep safety a top priority and core function in the future.

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.

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