



# Public Service Commission

## State of North Dakota

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July 2, 2008

David Sederquist, Sr. Consultant, Regulation and Finance  
Xcel Energy  
2302 Great Northern Divide  
Box 2747  
Fargo, ND 58108-2747

Re: Gas meter malfunctions

Dear Mr. Sederquist,

The commission has been receiving a number of complaints regarding Xcel Energy having to estimate bills because of gas meter malfunctions that occurred the past winter. In an e-mail message in March, you stated approximately 4,400 gas meters in North Dakota malfunctioned.

While reviewing these complaints, customers and commission staff have questions that the commission would like answered in writing:

1. How often do you read the meters?
2. If you read the meters at least once a month, why has it taken 3 months to fix some of these meters that malfunctioned?
3. Does Xcel Energy have a system that alerts someone when hundreds or thousands of meters show a substantial drop in usage?
4. Why has it taken until June to backbill people for meter problems that occurred in the winter?
5. Why are some people getting two bills on the same day that show different amounts due?
6. Why are there mathematical errors on some of the bills? One bill shows this for a meter reading:


Company reading on 03/03	5650
Company reading on 03/03	5810
Total usage in 0 days ccf	9840


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7. Staff has seen at least one bill due in June that said the next meter reading will be in March. Why is this happening?
8. Some of the meters showed some usage, while others showed no usage. Can the meters be tested to see how slow they were? (Our rules for slow meters are slightly different than the rules for meters that are totally dead).
9. Are there other issues in addition to the modules malfunctioning? Has Xcel's billing system malfunctioned?
10. In addition to basic subtraction errors on the bills, are there other errors on bills?
11. When will Xcel be done backbilling for these errors?
12. Xcel initially stated there were about 4,400 bad modules in North Dakota and that the company was still investigating the root cause. Has that number increased? Is there more information about the cause?
13. How much did Xcel spend on the new customer information system and what is North Dakota's share?
14. Where and how are the bills developed and mailed to North Dakota customers?
15. What is Xcel's policy when a customer asks for a reduced estimate because of factors such as being away on vacation, changes in use patterns or home improvements designed to save energy?

Please provide answers to these questions as soon as possible so the commission can adequately explain these issues to customers that have called us to complain. We also request a meeting with you in the near future to discuss this issue.

Sincerely,

  
Tony Clark

  
Susan E. Wefald

  
Kevin Cramer