

2302 Great Northern Drive  
P O Box 2747  
Fargo, ND 58108-2747  
(701) 241-8632  
dave.sederquist@xcelenergy.com

September 18, 2017

--Via Electronic Filing--

Darrell Nitschke, Executive Secretary  
North Dakota Public Service Commission  
State Capitol Building, Dept. 408  
600 East Boulevard  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480

RE: REVISIONS TO ITS TARIFF CONTACT INFORMATION  
CASE NO. PU-17-\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mr. Nitschke:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy, submits to the North Dakota Public Service Commission this petition for approval of miscellaneous tariff revisions to its "Contact List" page in both its electric and natural gas tariff books. The revisions will properly reflect the changes being made to our customer service phone hours and other minor revisions.

The filing fee of \$50 can be taken out of the Company's miscellaneous filing fund.

We have provided an electronic version of this application for your convenience as well as an original and seven copies.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

DAVID H. SEDERQUIST  
SR. CONSULTANT, REGULATION/FINANCE

Enclosures

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
BEFORE THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Randy Christmann	Chair
Julie Fedorchak	Commissioner
Brian Kroshus	Commissioner

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF  
NORTHERN STATES POWER COMPANY FOR  
APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO ITS TARIFF  
CONTACT INFORMATION

CASE NO. PU-17-\_\_\_\_

**PETITION**

### INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to ND Century Code 49-05-05, Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy, submits to the North Dakota Public Service Commission this Petition for approval of miscellaneous tariff updates to the Contact List pages of its North Dakota Electric and Natural Gas Rate Books.

The tariff changes proposed stem from the Company's intention to change the hours customer service representatives will be available to take non-emergency/non-outage customer calls. The new hours are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday. **This change will not affect calls regarding electric or natural gas emergencies or outages; our customer service representatives will remain available 24 hours-a-day/7 days-a-week (24/7) for all emergency and outage-related calls.** We met with the Commission Staff on July 13<sup>th</sup> to brief them on this change.

Currently, Section No. 2, Sheet No. 1 in the North Dakota Natural Gas Rate Book – NDPSC No. 2 specifies that our general customer service is available 24 hours. While customers calling our general customer service number will continue to be able to get information and complete transactions using our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system on a 24/7 basis, our customer service representatives will not be available for general issues and questions outside of the new general hours of operation. Therefore, we propose to remove the "24 hour" label from our general phone number.

The other change proposed is to update the contact information in the "Contact List" tariff sheet in both the Electric and Natural Gas Rate Books. This includes updating

the “All Matters Relating to Rates and Rules” section to reflect the current Company President Christopher Clark, and making consistent the other information shown on the “Contact List” tariff sheets in both the electric and natural gas rate books.

## **I. GENERAL FILING INFORMATION**

Pursuant to § 69-02-02-04 of the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure, the following information is provided.

### **Utility Employee Responsible for Filing**

David H. Sederquist  
Sr. Regulatory and Financial Consultant  
2302 Great Northern Drive  
PO Box 2747  
Fargo, ND 58108-2747  
(701) 241-8632

This petition is being filed September 18, 2017. Xcel Energy requests the miscellaneous tariff changes be effective the date of the Commission’s Order in this proceeding.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF THE FILING**

### **A. Overview**

We are filing updated tariff pages to reflect our intentions to adjust our call center hours of operation for non-emergency and non-outage (general) customer inquiries to better align with the hours and communication channels our customers are using to contact us. The new hours will apply to inquiries and issues *other than emergencies or outages* (for example, questions about billing or available energy efficiency rebates or programs), and will capture approximately 90 percent of the total agent-handled call volume:

Weekdays	7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Saturday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We will maintain our 24/7 call center hours of operation for all emergency and outage-related calls – meaning a customer can call at any hour of any day and choose to speak to a representative regarding an electric or natural gas emergency or outage. Our IVR and other digital service options will also remain available 24/7, so customers calling to make a payment or ask when their payment is due will still be able to get the information they need or complete transactions. Outside of these

hours, we will direct customers requesting to speak to a representative regarding a general issue to call back during standard business hours or to utilize an available digital channel.

This change is driven by our goal to meet our customers' preferences in the most cost-effective manner.

## **B. Background**

Consumers are growing increasingly accustomed to instant communications. Mobile devices have transformed how people communicate and share information, and as they offer smarter, faster, and more intuitive information, these devices are expected to become even more ingrained into our daily patterns and connected culture.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2010, Xcel Energy has been expanding digital channels through which customers can transact with and access information. Such transactions include viewing and paying bills, starting and stopping service, and reporting and monitoring the status of electrical outages. The Company's available communication channels now include: phone, IVR, email, text/SMS messaging, the xcelenergy.com website, social media, and most recently, the Xcel Energy mobile application (app).

At the same time that use of electronic communications is increasing, the use of traditional channels, such as speaking to a company representative and sending correspondence through the mail is declining. These trends are evident in our contact center operations. Of the customers that call the Company, approximately 60 percent choose to use our IVR option to complete a transaction. Digital transactions via our website and *My Account* portal have increased over 50 percent in the last four years, from 27 million to 43 million. Similarly, customer email volume has doubled since 2012, and social media interactions have increased five-fold since 2012. That said, however, there are still circumstances where individuals want – or require – individualized service.

## **C. Current Call Center Operations**

Today, our call center operations is comprised of a general customer service unit and various specialized service teams. We maintain three primary phone numbers:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kateharrison/2017/01/09/top-10-trends-that-will-transform-digital-marketing-in-2017/#28ec61903bf5>

Residential/General Customer Service: (800) 895-4999;  
Electric Outage: (800) 895-1999; and  
Natural Gas Emergency: (800) 895-2999.

General service representatives are currently staffed on a 24/7 basis and are the primary hub for customer calls, including those for emergencies and outages. All calls to our toll-free lines initially come into our IVR system where the majority of customers complete their transaction (report an outage, hear their balance, pay a bill, etc.).<sup>2</sup> If customers cannot complete their transaction, or decide they want to speak to a representative, they have the option to exit the IVR and are routed to an agent.

Our specialized service teams include:

- *Business Solutions Center (BSC)*. The BSC serves the specialized needs of our small to medium-sized business customers, responding to billing and other questions, discussing rate options, and promote demand side management opportunities. The BSC is staffed 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- *Credit Team*. The Credit team interacts with all customers that have fallen behind on their bill payments, and is staffed 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for residential customers and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for business customers, Monday through Friday.
- *Personal Account Representatives (PAR)*. The PAR group interacts with customers on energy assistance, medical certification, and safe-at-home programs. The PAR team is staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- *Correspondence Team*. The Correspondence team is staffed 24/7. The Correspondence team fulfills requests from customers and property managers sent only via paper, email, and fax correspondence, and interacts with customers via email and social media. During emergency/outage periods, they provide digital customer updates and support.

#### **D. Planned Operational Changes**

Changing our non-outage/non-emergency customer service operations to align better with our customers' communication preferences and patterns will allow us to be more efficient while maintaining our level of service. This will require some of our

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<sup>2</sup> The exception to this is our gas emergency line, which routes directly to a person(s).

customer service representatives currently assigned to general customer service calls to be reassigned to the Correspondence team to help respond to the increasing digital volume. At the same time, these representatives will remain available to aid with calls should we experience an unplanned increase in volume due to severe weather, for example.

After we make our planned changes all customer calls will continue to initially come into our IVR (or be directed to a representative, in the case of natural gas emergency calls). Customers calling outside of the new general customer service hours will hear a message indicating the Company is taking calls only for emergencies and outages. If a customer selects an outage or emergency IVR prompt during the emergency-only hours, and actually has a non-outage/non-emergency question or issue, the agent will: let the customer know at this time we are only accepting emergency/outage calls and invite them to call back during our regular business hours; offer them the option to transact with our IVR; and/or, ensure they are aware of our other electronic correspondence options. Our specialized service teams will continue to provide service as described above.

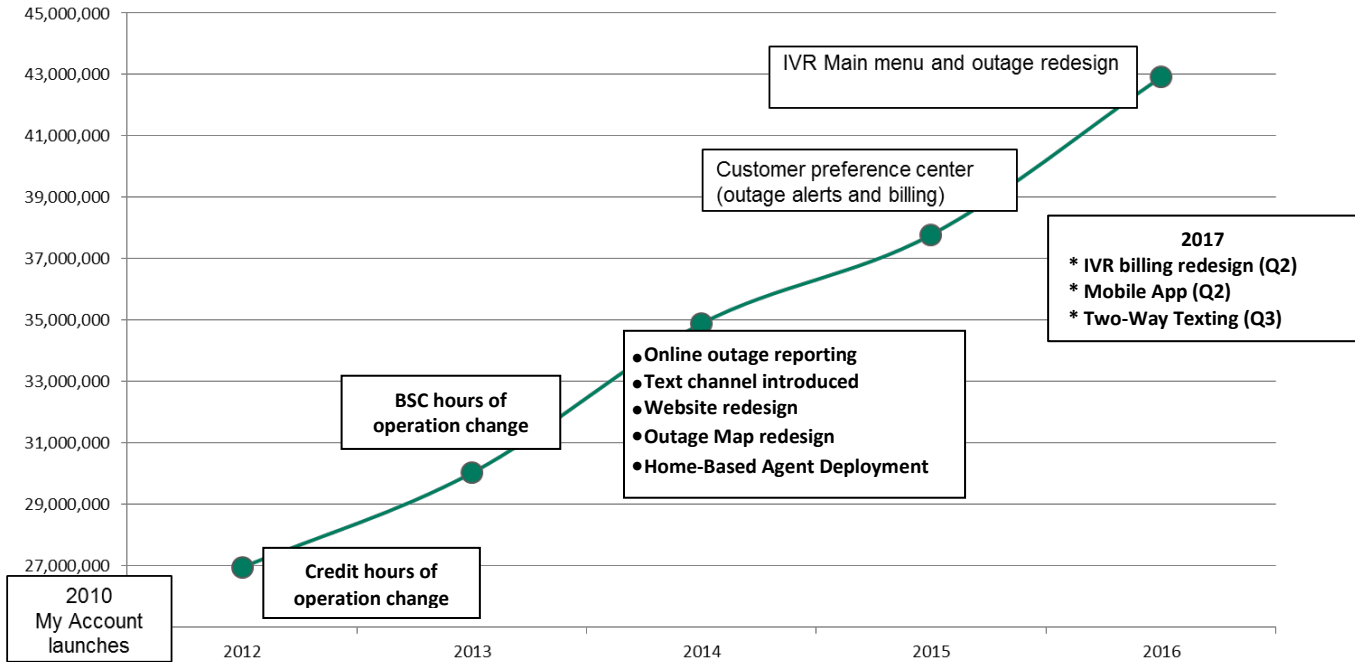
#### **E. Rationale for This Change**

Currently, approximately 55 percent of our transactions with customers are digital, and that percentage is increasing.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 below shows how digital transactions have increased since *My Account* was launched in 2010. We have additionally noted the timing of other changes occurring in the Company's customer operations along the way, such as when we implemented the customer preference center and outage alerts options for customers in 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> This percentage is representative of all transactions with customers, such as electronic bills, electronic payments, etc.

**Figure 1: Customer Adoption of Digital Channels – Xcel Energy**



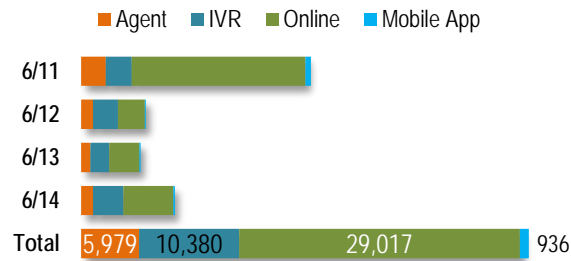
Currently, approximately 1.2 million – or about 30 percent – of Xcel Energy customers receive their monthly bills electronically. About 2.4 million, or nearly 60 percent, pay them electronically. We have approximately 1.6 million customers enrolled in our *My Account* self-service tool – 96 percent of which are residential – and over 90,000 customers have downloaded the Xcel Energy mobile app since its launch on May 30, 2017. In terms of communication preferences, 311,000 Xcel Energy customers have expressed a preference for text messages; 150,000 prefer phone contact; and, 200,000 prefer email communications.<sup>4</sup>

To further demonstrate this shift to digital channels, during a mid-June 2017 storm in our Upper Midwest NSP System, our storm center on xcelenergy.com saw over 80,000 clicks, and our outage map had nearly 226,000 clicks. Social media saw 517,000 impressions during the storm event and over 45,000 after the event. Finally, we delivered over 650,000 notifications to customers throughout the event, with 57 percent occurring via email, 33 percent via text, and the remaining 10 percent via phone.

<sup>4</sup> Customers can elect one or more communication channel preferences, so these numbers do not represent unique Xcel Energy customer counts.

Customers overwhelmingly reported their outages online (63 percent), with IVR following in a distant second (22 percent), and use of our customer service representatives (phone agents) representing just 13 percent of the total, as follows:

**Figure 2: Customer-Reported Outages by Contact Method**  
(June 2017 Storms in MN, ND, and SD)



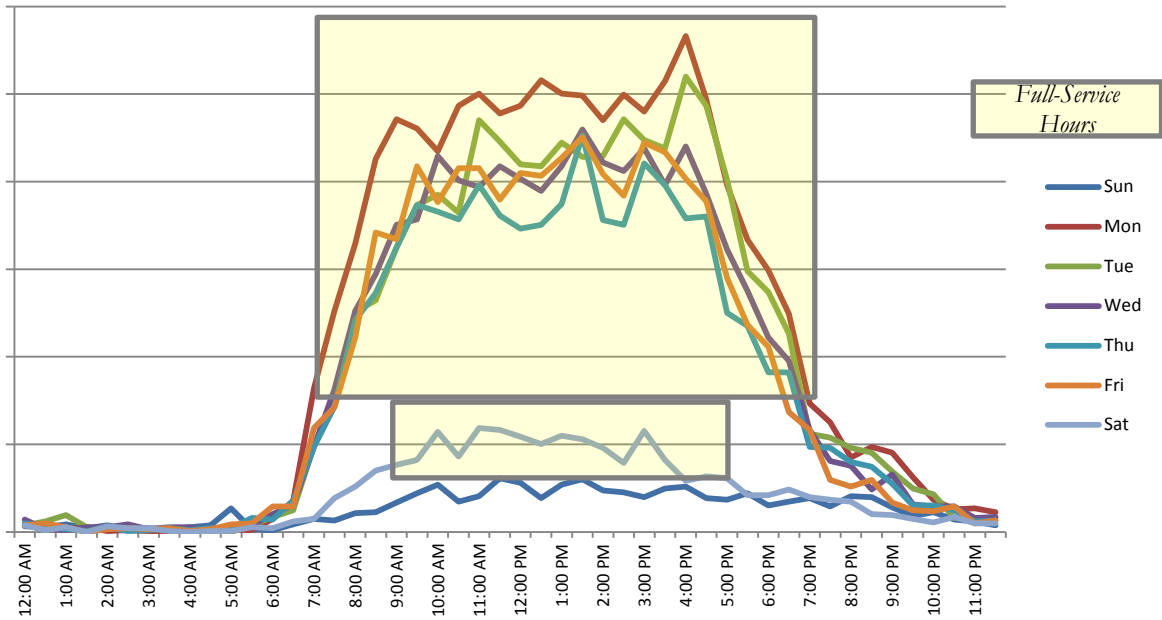
We note that although our mobile app just launched weeks before the storm event, already two percent of the outage reports we received were made via the app.

**F. Updated Business Hours Based on Customer Contact Patterns**

To determine our updated business hours, we analyzed call statistics and considered issues such as customers that may work alternative work schedules. We chose the 7 am to 7 pm weekday and 9 am to 5 pm Saturday hours because they capture nearly 90 percent of the total calls we receive. In other words, these are the times of day when most customers choose to contact a representative. These hours are also broad enough to afford customers working alternative shifts the opportunity to interact with a customer service representative, if needed.

Figure 3 below shows average daily call volume of customers opting to speak to a customer service representative. The highlighted boxes indicate our planned general customer service business hours.

**Figure 3: Average Daily Incoming Agent-Handled Call Volume\***



\* Includes General Customer Service, Emergency, and Outage Phone calls

There is a marked increase in call volume at 7 am and a marked decrease in calls after 7 pm – with sustained lower volume during the Monday through Friday overnight hours. The highest Saturday volumes are similarly contained in our intended 9 am to 5 pm timeframe. We note that our Sunday call volumes represent just three percent of total agent-handled calls.

Figure 4 below shows customer IVR utilization as a percentage of calls during a typical weekday, which shows higher levels of utilization in the overnight, early morning, and late evening hours. This customer pattern of utilization also aligns with our change in general customer service hours.

**Figure 4: IVR Utilization - Weekday Average**

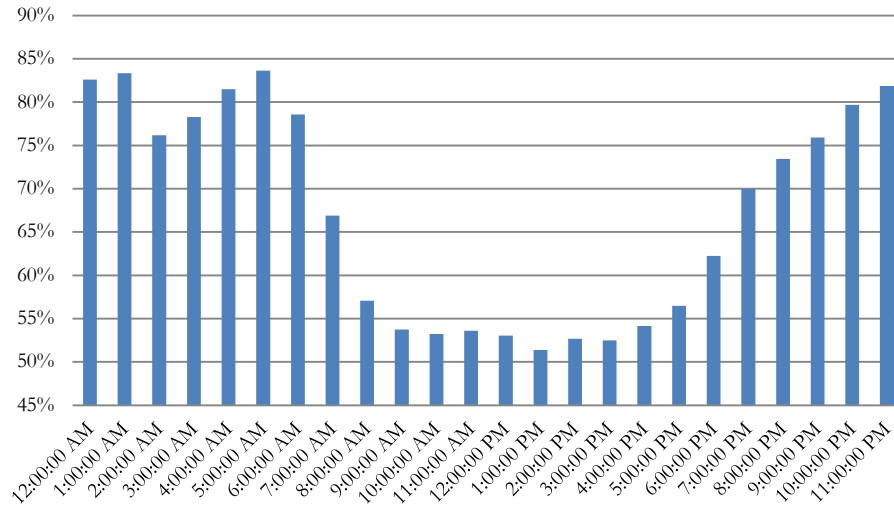
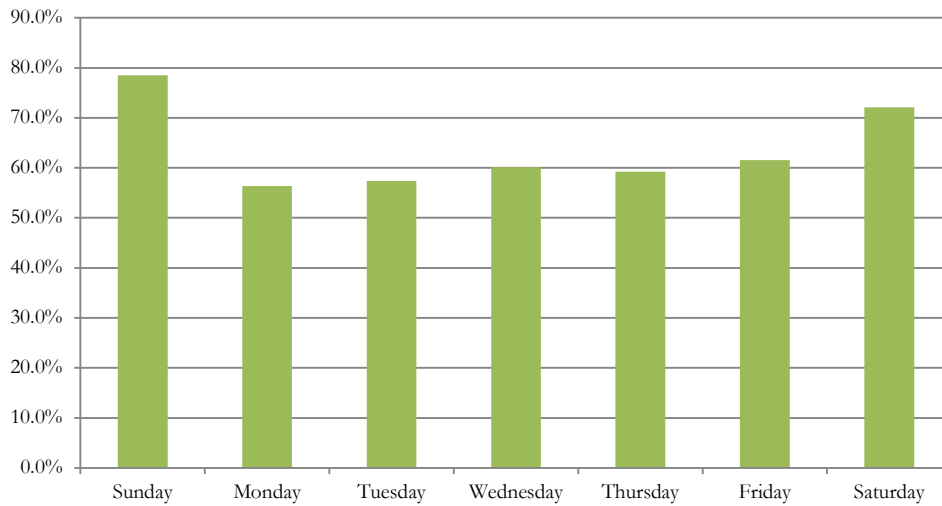


Figure 5 below shows average IVR utilization by day of the week. Note that Saturday and Sunday use generally exceeds weekday utilization, again aligning with our change in general customer service hours.

**Figure 5: Average IVR Utilization by Day of Week**



## **G. The Change is Consistent with Industry Trends**

In early 2017, we conducted informal benchmarking with a group of peer utilities to understand existing call center business hours and trends that might be underway. All were investor-owned, had similarly-sized contact center operations, and were industry leaders in customer satisfaction and loyalty – with the majority being combination electric and natural gas utilities. In summary, only 14 percent are operating 24/7 for general customer service and have no plans to change that aspect of their operations. One utility currently operating 24/7 was in the process of moving away from that schedule. All of the utilities continue to operate 24/7 for emergency-related calls, consistent with our plan – and all also indicated a trend of customers increasingly using digital channels.

## **H. Implementation**

### *1. Operational and Customer Transition*

After receiving regulatory approvals in states where required, we will need approximately 90 days in advance of the effective date of the change to implement it both operationally and in terms of informing our customers. Operationally, we have already begun communicating this change internally to our customer care employees and started shifting customer service representatives from phone to digital channel support. We are providing advance notice to our impacted representatives of their new work schedules, so they have time to make needed adjustments in their personal lives. We expect to begin developing the new schedules about 90 days in advance of implementation – finalizing and communicating the schedules approximately 60 days in advance of our change to the new business hours.

We plan to start communicating the change to customers approximately 30 days in advance of the effective date. Our pre-implementation communications will be to customers desiring to speak to a representative during what will be our emergency-only hours. They will hear a message regarding the upcoming change in hours before being routed to the representative. Similarly, our representatives interacting with customers in the late evening, overnight, and early morning outage- and emergency-only hours will be informed of the upcoming change in our general customer service business hours.

In developing our customer communication plan, we considered the data underlying our decision to modify our general customer service business hours. As previously noted, approximately 90 percent of our total call volume is during our updated general business hours. Thus we determined that broader approaches such as bill messages

and on-hold messaging to *all* customers would be a distraction for the vast majority of customers. So we plan to target messaging to the less than 10 percent of customers currently using representative-level service outside of the updated hours.

Upon implementation, we will update all information sources that contain our business hours (phone directories, social media, customer bill statements, customer correspondence, etc.) to reflect the new emergency/non-emergency distinction in our business hours.

## 2. *Operational Efficiencies Will Occur Over Time*

Our move to more focused general customer service business hours will create some scheduling efficiencies over time resulting in reduced hiring and training costs. Initially, we will be reassigning representatives from lower call volume, less efficient times, to support our customers better during the times they prefer to call. This means increasing staffing during the core general service hours, and an increase in the Correspondence team, who interact with customers digitally. Over time, however, we anticipate this change will reduce the number of representatives we will need.

### **I. Proposed Tariff Sheets**

Xcel Energy proposes to revise the following sheets in Section 2 of the Northern States Power Company North Dakota *Electric* Rate Book and Section 2 of the Northern States Power Company North Dakota *Natural Gas* Rate Book.

#### **North Dakota Electric Rate Book – NDPSC No. 2**

Section No. 2, Sheet No. 1, revision 2

#### **North Dakota Gas Rate Book – NDPSC No. 2**

Section No. 2, Sheet No. 1, revision 3

## CONCLUSION

Xcel Energy respectfully requests the Commission approve the proposed miscellaneous tariff revisions.

Dated: September 18, 2017

Northern States Power Company



By: \_\_\_\_\_

DAVID H. SEDERQUIST  
SR. REGULATORY CONSULTANT  
XCEL ENERGY (NORTH DAKOTA)

Case No. PU-17-\_\_\_\_  
Changes to Contact Information Petition  
Attachment A

**Tarriff Sheets Contact Information (Electric)  
Redline & Clean**

Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

PROPOSED

**NORTH DAKOTA ELECTRIC RATE BOOK - NDPSC NO. 2**

**CONTACT LIST**

Section No. 2  
~~4<sup>th</sup>~~<sup>2<sup>nd</sup></sup> Revised Sheet No. 1

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Listed below is the name, title, address, and telephone numbers of ~~Northern States Power~~ Company personnel to be contacted in connection with:

All Matters Relating to Rates and Rules	<del>Judy M. Poyer</del> <u>Christopher B. Clark</u> President, <del>and CEO</del> Northern States Power Company, <del>a Minnesota corporation</del> 414 Nicollet Mall Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401 <u>Telephone No. 1-800-328-8226</u>
<u>Electric</u> Emergencies and Outages	1-800-895-1999
<u>Residential Customer Service</u>	<u>1-800-895-4999</u>
<u>Business Customer Service</u>	<u>1-800-481-4700</u>
<u>TDD/TYY (Hearing Impaired Services)</u>	<u>1-800-895-4949</u>
<u>Internet Address</u>	<u>xcelenergy.com</u>

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Date Filed:	<del>12-20-10</del> <u>09-18-17</u>	By:	<del>Judy M. Poyer</del> <u>Christopher B. Clark</u>	Effective Date:	<del>05-04-12</del>
Case No.	<del>PU-17-40-657 &amp; PU-44-55</del>		Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation	Order Date:	<del>02-29-12</del>

**NORTH DAKOTA ELECTRIC RATE BOOK - NDPSC NO. 2**

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**CONTACT LIST**

Section No. 2  
2nd Revised Sheet No. 1

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Listed below is the name, title, address, and telephone numbers of Company personnel to be contacted in connection with:

All Matters Relating to Rates and Rules	Christopher B. Clark President, Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation 414 Nicollet Mall Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401 Telephone No. 1-800-328-8226	T T T N
Electric Emergencies and Outages	1-800-895-1999	T
Residential Customer Service	1-800-895-4999	N
Business Customer Service	1-800-481-4700	N
TDD/TYY (Hearing Impaired Services)	1-800-895-4949	N
Internet Address	xcelenergy.com	N

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Date Filed: 09-18-17

By: Christopher B. Clark

Effective Date:

President, Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation

Case No. PU-17-

Order Date:

Case No. PU-17-\_\_\_\_  
Changes to Contact Information Petition  
Attachment B

**Tarriff Sheets Contact Information (Gas)  
Redline & Clean**

PROPOSED

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CONTACT LIST

Section No. 2  
~~2nd~~ Revised Sheet No. 1

Listed below is the name, title, address, and telephone numbers of Company personnel to be contacted in connection with:

All Matters Relating to Rates and Rules	<del>Kent T. Larson</del> Christopher B. Clark Vice President, of Jurisdictional Relations Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy a Minnesota corporation 414 Nicollet Mall Minneapolis, MN 55401 Telephone No. 1-800-328-8226	T T T F F I
Gas Emergencies and Outages	Telephone No. <del>(1-800)-</del> 895-2999	T
<del>24-Hour</del> Residential Customer Service	Telephone No. <del>(1-800)-</del> 895-4999	T
Business <del>Solutions Center</del> ( <del>Business</del> Customer Service)	Telephone No. <del>(1-800)-</del> 481-4700	T T
TDD/TYY (Hearing Impaired Services)	Telephone No. <del>(1-800)-</del> 895-4949	N I
Internet Address	<a href="http://www.xcelenergy.com">www.xcelenergy.com</a>	N I

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Date Filed: ~~11-02-04~~ 09-18-17 By: ~~Kent T. Larson~~ Christopher B. Clark Effective Date: ~~07-01-05~~  
Vice President, Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation of Jurisdictional Relations  
Case No. PU ~~400-04-57817-~~ Order Date: ~~06-01-05~~

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**CONTACT LIST**

Section No. 2  
3rd Revised Sheet No. 1

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Listed below is the name, title, address, and telephone numbers of Company personnel to be contacted in connection with:

All Matters Relating to Rates and Rules	Christopher B. Clark President, Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation 414 Nicollet Mall Minneapolis, MN 55401 Telephone No. 1-800-328-8226	T T T T
Gas Emergencies and Outages	1-800-895-2999	T
Residential Customer Service	1-800-895-4999	T
Business Customer Service	1-800-481-4700	T
TDD/TYY (Hearing Impaired Services)	1-800-895-4949	T
Internet Address	xcelenergy.com	T

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Date Filed: 09-18-17

By: Christopher B. Clark

Effective Date:

President, Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation

Case No. PU-17-

Order Date: