

energy

CONNECTIONS

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NorthWestern
Energy
Delivering a Bright Future

in this
issue...

NORTHWESTERN ENERGY'S
RESPONSE PROCEDURE

WAYS TO HELP THE EARTH
IN 30 MINUTES OR LESS EVERY DAY

NorthWestern Launches Bozeman Recovery Web Site

NorthWestern Energy has launched a new Web site, www.bozemanrecovery.com, to provide information about the recovery efforts following the March 5 explosion in downtown Bozeman, Montana.

The site includes press releases, an open letter to the community, answers to frequently asked questions and ongoing updates from NorthWestern as the investigation, cleanup and restoration efforts continue. It also provides residents and other concerned citizens with the ability to ask questions or provide comments to the company.

"We've never created a Web site dedicated to providing information about a single event before, but this is a unique situation," said Bob Rowe, President and CEO of NorthWestern Energy. "This site provides people all over the country with a single point of contact to get information about what we're doing to help the community recover from this tragic event."

The site also includes information on the natural gas safety programs and procedures the company follows to maintain a safe and reliable natural gas system. In addition, the site offers information on ways individuals and organizations may assist those people – employees and residents – directly impacted by the explosion.

"The local, state and national economy was the primary concern before March 5 and we share the concern voiced by nearly everyone we've talked to about the additional impact this event may have on the local economy," added Rowe. "More than anything we want to assure people that downtown Bozeman is a safe and enjoyable place to shop, dine and relax. Downtown Bozeman is most definitely open for business." ■



NorthWestern Energy's Response Procedure

When disaster strikes, NorthWestern Energy mobilizes to secure electric and natural gas services that may be affected. An incident team is organized, comprised of front-line responders, engineers and others from throughout the company. The team is typically led on site and remains together through a post-incident evaluation.

The recent explosion in downtown Bozeman is an example of how NorthWestern's front-line crews and other employees help ensure public safety. Following is a breakdown of the company's response to this disaster.

The First 24 Hours

NorthWestern Energy electric and natural gas service employees were on the scene within minutes after the explosion. The company was asked to respond by the Bozeman Fire Department, which is standard procedure in any fire or emergency situation, but employees who felt and or heard the blast were already en route to assist.

In any emergency situation, the scene is chaotic. This explosion blew out windows in the surrounding area. Shards of glass, splintered wood, bricks and mortar, roofing nails and building material was strewn around a two-block perimeter. Employees quickly coordinated with Bozeman Fire and Police Departments to de-energize the electric service to the downtown area to help protect the safety of emergency workers fighting the fire and assisted with evacuation of residents and businesses in the immediate area.

As linemen and engineers further assessed the situation and the area, they were able to narrow the scope of the electrical safety shutdown and restored electrical service to all but the most affected area. This included turning on service to City Hall and emergency services located just blocks from the scene.

Gas service technicians shut off natural gas at the meters to buildings in the area that were most at risk of fire. This, too, is standard procedure in any emergency situation. Several natural gas service lines were damaged in the blast, and blowing natural gas created flames eight to ten feet high. The first priority was to help fire fighters secure the scene and provide whatever assistance they needed with immediate response.

NorthWestern Energy quickly assembled a team of employee experts to help address the crisis including those with experience in gas transmission operations and maintenance, pipeline safety, engineering, planning, supply procurement, communications and customer service. This team began reviewing maps and engineering plans to determine how best to isolate and stop the flow of natural gas to the damaged lines.

The company brought in employees from Butte and Deer Lodge to assist with the effort. Approximately a block west of the explosion, Bozeman Division employees exposed the buried 8-inch steel gas main located in the alley to reach a valve that had been installed in 2007. This valve enables a piece of equipment called a stopper fitting to be inserted and seal off the pipeline.

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NorthWestern Energy's Response Procedure

The "Westliners," NorthWestern Energy's highly specialized gas transmission response team based in Deer Lodge, began work east of the explosion to install another valve. The line is worked hot – meaning pressurized gas is in the line while crews weld a fitting around the pipe then attach a Mueller Tapping Machine (the name of the piece of equipment) to drill a hole very slowly in the top and bottom of the pipe. Once the holes are drilled the stopper plug is inserted and the flow of gas is stopped.

This work began shortly after the crew arrived from Deer Lodge around 11 a.m. and the valve and fitting were finished around 5:30 p.m. When pressure to the damaged gas line didn't decrease as expected, the main was further excavated and another gas main, which ran perpendicular to this main, was found just east of the western-most valve. Crews determined that the best – and safest – approach was to install another stopper fitting on the alley main closer to the site of the explosion. That fitting was installed by 11:30 p.m. stopping the flow of gas by midnight.

Shortly after the initial response and once the area was evacuated, NorthWestern Energy employees in coordination with the Bozeman Fire Department, began testing the ground (called pegging and bar holing) to look for gas leaks. They worked from the outside edge of the perimeters towards the center to the site of the explosion looking for anything that might indicate the presence of a gas leak. They also inspected buildings for gas leaks and ensured gas meters were in good working condition.

By 7 p.m., although the flow of natural gas had not been stopped at the site of the explosion, Bozeman emergency officials determined that all but the immediately-affected area was safe and allowed business owners and residents to return to their property to secure the locations. By this time, fire fighters had the fire contained but used the flames to ensure that the blowing natural gas was safely consumed. Electric service crews were able to restore service to all but a handful of customers.

After the Immediate Crisis

NorthWestern Energy employees remain on an incident scene long after the immediate crisis is over. In this case, NorthWestern linemen repaired and inspected explosion-damaged electric services, transformers, insulators and line equipment. By 2:30 a.m. the next day, electric service was restored to all customers except those businesses destroyed or severely damaged by the explosion.

Natural gas service technicians accompanied business or property owners as they entered their buildings to test for any potential problems and to relight pilot lights. The company also continued to work on the natural gas main to place secure caps on the pipeline so temporary, aboveground services could be run to nearby businesses. This was critically important to those businesses that needed heat to reopen and to ensure that an approaching cold front didn't result in broken water pipes.

The installation of the caps also secured the services at the explosion site, enabling the investigation into the cause of the explosion to continue. Working in coordination with the Montana Public Service Commission and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Pipeline Safety Administration, along with other investigating officials from the U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and the Bozeman Fire Department, the company is assisting with tests of the main, service lines and meters and other equipment at the site. The company is cooperating fully and doing all it can to provide whatever information is needed by the investigating authorities.

NorthWestern Energy operates its electric and natural gas systems in compliance with all existing federal and state rules and regulations. The company does annual leak inspection surveys per DOT regulations in downtown commercial areas and along its major transmission pipelines. Residential areas are surveyed every five years, in accordance with DOT regulations. The company also runs advertisements and statement notices educating people on how to recognize the smell of natural gas and what to do if they smell natural gas. Property owners are responsible for the maintenance of natural gas lines from the meter onto their property.

Anyone who believes they smell natural gas should immediately leave the area without turning on or off lights or picking up a telephone, which may spark an explosion, and call NorthWestern Energy or 911 from a safe location. Gas odor calls are assigned highest priority and are promptly responded to around the clock, seven days a week. ■

How to report natural gas emergencies – including gas odor, carbon monoxide and no heat calls:

In Montana: (888) 467-2427

In South Dakota/Nebraska: (800) 245-6977

contact

MONTANA

Customer Contact Center	
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F	(888) 467-2669
Emergency 24/7 Service	
Electric	(888) 467-2353
Natural Gas	(888) 467-2427
Call Before You Dig	811
Energy Efficiency	(800) 823-5995

NEBRASKA

Customer Contact Center	
6 a.m. - 10 p.m. M-F	(800) 245-6977
Emergency 24/7 Service	(800) 245-6977
Call Before You Dig	811

SOUTH DAKOTA

Customer Contact Center	
6 a.m. - 10 p.m. M-F	(800) 245-6977
Emergency 24/7 Service	(800) 245-6977
Call Before You Dig	811

PAYMENT

Automated Phone	
Payment Option:	(800) 218-4959
(via checking, savings, or money market account)	

SpeedPay Automated	
Phone Payment Option:	(877) 361-4927
(via credit card account)	

Ways to Help the Earth in 30 Minutes or Less Every Day



You might not be able to reduce energy demand, end pollution or save endangered species single-handedly, but by

choosing to live an Earth-friendly lifestyle you can do much every day to help achieve those goals. We at NorthWestern Energy are dedicated to energy efficiency and protecting our environment, and we encourage you to do the same by celebrating Earth Day with us on Wednesday, April 22, 2009.

By making wise choices about how you live, and the amount of energy and natural resources you consume, you become an environmental steward. Here are five simple things that you can do to help protect the environment.

- ◆ Change a Light Bulb – compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) use about ¼ the electricity of an incandescent bulb.*
- ◆ Install a timer on your lights and programmable thermostat for your heating-and-cooling system.
- ◆ Walk or ride a bicycle for short trips, or take public transportation for longer ones.
- ◆ Switch to reusable shopping bags – worldwide, up to a trillion plastic bags are used and discarded every year.
- ◆ Pay your bills online – NorthWestern Energy offers online bill pay to eliminate the need to write and mail paper checks. Log-on to www.northwesternenergy.com to find out more. ■

△ NorthWestern Energy offers rebates on energy efficient lighting to Montana electric customers through electric supply rates. Visit our Web site to learn more and watch your mail for the Earth Day coupon offer.