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Xcel Energy announces first “Smart Grid City” in the nation

Minneapolis-based IOU Xcel Energy is going to create a “smart grid” demonstration city of approximately 100,000 people in Boulder, CO. Xcel sees itself as a forward thinking utility, a responsible corporate citizen and is seriously committed to addressing the environmental issues of new generation versus the needs for reliable power for its growing customer base.

“We are on the verge of a significant transformation in an industry that has seen relatively little change during its long history”, said Dick Kelly, chairman, president and CEO of Xcel.

The idea is to “reshape and define the future of the marketplace. Using the smart grid, we can provide innovative solutions to the environmental challenges facing all of us today,” Kelly told the press.

He described the benefits of the smart grid as including lower power bills, smart energy management, better grid reliability and efficiency plus the added use of renewable energy sources and support for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and intelligent home applications.

Power Grid Communications is well positioned to deliver these benefits to utilities and municipalities across the country. Chris Britton, president of PowerGrid Communications comments, “ While Xcel is taking a lead in building out a large smart grid, we get requests every week about deploying pilot programs from various utilities. The time has come, last year we got requests for 100 home trials, this week they are talking about 10,000 to 50,000 homes passed, recognizing the need to deploy the smart grid on a larger scale to really understand the benefits.”

Another key area of the platform includes communications for distributed generation. Various generation sources will be connected to the grid and will need to report information to the utility. Knowing whether a DG unit is generating power and how much it makes is key for the utility to integrate it into its infrastructure.

Until you deploy an entire relatively large geographic area, you will never understand how to integrate all the data and understand the results. “Through the use of our GridEye Network management system, we can capture and correlate data from AMI meters, line sensors, substation monitoring devices, distributed generation, as well as help the utility manage their grid better”, states Jeff Schumacher, COO PowerGrid Communications. “It’s not the smart grid, but what you do with the data the network collects which makes it valuable.”

Excerpts taken from and Xcel Energy News Release 3/12/08 and BPL Today 1/22/08