



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

April 9, 2024

Robert S. Kenney
President
Xcel Energy Colorado
1800 Larimer St
Denver, CO 80202

Mr. Kenney,

I share the disappointment and frustration of many fellow Coloradans who were and continue to be impacted by Xcel Energy Colorado's decision to proactively de-energize parts of the electric system in anticipation of a significant wind storm the weekend of April 6, 2024.

This unprecedented Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) significantly impacted, and in many cases surprised, tens of thousands of Coloradans. We know that increasing drought and climate change leads to drier conditions and the possibility of wildfire, so Xcel must recognize the shortcomings of this incident, learn from it, and be prepared to change your approach to these incidents to minimize loss of power. Lessons-learned should be addressed in your upcoming Wildfire Mitigation Plan to be submitted to the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Shutting off power to customers is a serious and challenging decision that should only be done as a last resort. Customers deserve transparency, real-time information, and accountability if these events occur. While I applaud your staff and front line crews for restoring power in a challenging situation where major infrastructure damage did in fact occur, this incident has further harmed Xcel's reputation and social license. During the days following the high winds event, I heard from many frustrated Coloradans who lost power for multiple days without clear indication from Xcel when it would be restored- from businesses that could not operate and lost perishable inventories and income, from hospitals that struggled to respond to vulnerable community members, and from schools that had to close all day Monday. Once again, the company failed to minimize outages and effectively communicate with customers about an upcoming change that would impact people's regular lives.

The National Weather Service reported ahead of the wind storm the expectation of wind gusts in excess of 90 mph across the foothills, I-25 corridor, and Colorado Plains, noting multiple potential hazards including property or tree damage, power outages, and high fire danger and risk of rapid wildfire spread. According to analysis by the Colorado Department of Transportation, this recent wind storm had gusts of 96 miles per hour; however it is atypical to see such strong winds during an April event, as there have only been 17 (6%) of these types of wind events in April since 1969. Yet, none of these wind events tracked since 1969 have resulted in a planned outage like we saw this week.

We understand that lines will be damaged and some people will lose power, but this particular storm should not have resulted in as many people losing power for such a long period of time.

There is major room for improvement and I am directing the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to investigate the following requirements in your upcoming Wildfire Mitigation Plan, and any related review of your investment plans and customer programs and strategies, to avoid the harms done during this first PSPS in Colorado:

1. **The choice to execute a future PSPS.** The decision to execute a PSPS cannot be taken lightly. I direct the PUC to put in place guardrails to ensure that utility PSPS decisions only occur when consistent with the public interest and when absolutely necessary. These decisions must contemplate the costs of such an extreme measure such as disruptions to business, education, those who rely on electricity for life and death health needs, and other factors need to be fully considered.
2. **Customer Communications.** In the coming days and weeks, I direct the PUC to reach out to impacted customers to hear firsthand about their experience during the outage and where utility notice and updates were provided and helpful, and where they were lacking. I direct the PUC to ensure that if a future PSPS is deemed essential and the benefits outweigh the full costs, that impacted customers have access to timely, comprehensible, and relevant information regarding the timing of the PSPS, the locations where outages will be experienced, available support services, and expected outage restoration and recovery timelines.
3. **Public mapping.** Customers deserve full transparency in understanding outages and the activity of Xcel Energy crews in restoring service. Our expectation is the PUC will ensure Xcel Energy has updated mapping that is meaningful and actionable for customers during PSPS as well as all outages.
4. **Emergency response coordination.** Residents need to have support services in the emergency and healthcare system to provide critical services if they lose

access to electricity in their homes. The PUC and Xcel must ensure the most vulnerable residents are adequately notified of extended power outages and have the time to secure sufficient resources to persist in an outage, especially in cold weather.

5. **Coordination with other utilities.** It is important that Xcel coordinate closely with adjacent utilities during events like these on messaging and response so that customers receive consistent information across the impacted areas.
6. **PUC emergency regulatory action.** Recognizing that the process of reviewing the wildfire mitigation plan will take some time, I've asked the PUC immediately open a formal docket to fully understand the failures of this past week, and to also consider adopting emergency rules that would put in place a higher bar and immediate outreach and notification requirements for planned outages as an interim solution until a long-term strategy is in place.

In addition to these specific areas for improvement regarding PSPS, we know the company continues to evaluate technology solutions to construct a more resilient grid including the use of advanced reconductoring, grid enhancing technologies, and sensors and automation, among other strategies, all of which I support.

Coloradans have always worked together to improve our shared wellbeing. I look forward to working with the Colorado state government, the Colorado General Assembly, and Colorado's utilities to drive continuous improvement in our response to severe weather and to protect this state we love so dearly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado

CC:

Patty Salazar, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies

Rebecca White, Director, Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Commissioner Eric Blank, Chair, Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Commissioner Megan Gilman, Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Commissioner Tom Plant, Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Senator Stephen Fenberg

Senator Sonya Jaquez Lewis

Senator Janice Marchman

Representative Judy Amabile

Representative Junie Joseph

Representative Karen McCormick

Representative Kyle Brown

Representative Jennifer Lea Parenti