



3460 Washington Drive #210
Eagan, MN 55122
p. 763.424.1841
ahenkel@blueflame.org
www.blueflame.org

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

MN Blue Flame Fall Conference Brings Industry Leaders Together at Surly Brewing

The Minnesota Blue Flame Fall Conference, held on **Wednesday, October 22nd** at **Surly Brewery in Minneapolis**, gathered over **85 representatives from across the natural gas industry** for a day of insights, collaboration, and forward-looking discussion. The event served as a key touchpoint for energy professionals to connect on current issues and future trends shaping Minnesota's natural gas landscape.



Shawn Walls from **Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation** served as the event's Master of Ceremonies, guiding attendees through a robust agenda featuring updates from utility leaders and policy experts.

The conference began with **Emma Ingebretsen** from **CenterPoint Energy**, who provided an update on **CenterPoint's NGIA (Natural Gas Innovation Act)** initiatives. Her presentation outlined progress on innovation projects, technology development, and the company's continued efforts to advance cleaner, more efficient energy solutions for Minnesota customers.

Next, **Dana Cottrell** from **Xcel Energy** delivered a comprehensive update on **Xcel's ongoing initiatives**, highlighting the company's strategic approach to balancing energy reliability, customer affordability, and decarbonization goals. Cottrell emphasized Xcel's commitment to innovation in both traditional and emerging energy sectors.

After a short networking break, **Jim Pearson** of **Xcel Energy** and **Jamie Fitzke** of **CenterPoint Energy** took the stage to discuss the **upcoming 2026 legislative session**. Their joint presentation laid the groundwork for potential policy issues the industry may face and provided an overview of **pending dockets before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission** that could significantly influence the natural gas industry in the coming years.

The conference concluded with an engaging presentation by **Eric Todd** of **Encore Energy Services**, who walked attendees through the **complex path natural gas markets**. Todd also shared his **predictions for winter natural gas prices**, offering valuable market insights as the industry prepares for the colder months ahead.

Attendees had the opportunity for additional networking after the conference adjourned.

A special recognition to sponsors who help make this event possible.

MAJOR SPONSOR



SUPPORTING SPONSORS



GOLD SPONSORS



Politics, Power, and Planning: What's Ahead for Minnesota Energy Policy in 2026

As Minnesota gears up for its 2026 legislative session, the political landscape and policy priorities are setting the stage for what promises to be an interesting year at the Capitol. Following the November 4th elections, the Minnesota Senate will remain under DFL control, holding a slim 34–33 majority over Republicans. However, the Minnesota House's tied status faces a temporary shake-up with two DFL seats now vacant. The Governor is expected to announce special elections before the session convenes on February 17, 2026, to fill those seats and return the chamber's balance of power.

The upcoming session will unfold against the backdrop of a major election year. All 67 Senate seats, 134 House seats, the Governor's office, and every statewide office will be on the November 2026 ballot — an alignment that tends to heighten political maneuvering and influence legislative priorities.

With narrow margins in both chambers and every lawmaker facing reelection, 2026's session will be shaped by electoral calculus as much as policy ambition. It is difficult to predicate which, if any issues, will have the political bipartisan strength to move forward during this session. Some issues that could be brought up:

- **CHIPs – Clean Heat Incentive Plan**
- **TENs – Thermal Energy Networks**
- **Appliance Exclusion:** Legislators may also revisit discussions on appliance efficiency standards, exemptions, and consumer choice.
- **Federal Cascade:** Minnesota will need to navigate the interplay between new federal energy programs and state-level initiatives — particularly how federal funding opportunities might “cascade” into local projects and regulatory frameworks.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

While lawmakers prepare for a busy legislative session, attention is also turning to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), where several major regulatory matters are expected to unfold in 2026. The PUC — composed of five commissioners appointed by the Governor to staggered six-year terms — plays a pivotal role in shaping the state's energy future through its oversight of utilities, rates, and infrastructure investments.

One issue drawing particular focus is **line extension allowance policy**, which governs how utilities extend gas service to new developments and how those costs are

allocated. Line extension allowances are a long-standing mechanism to ensure equitable access to utility service. Removing these allowances would shift significant upfront costs to new customers, creating barriers to access for households and small businesses, especially in rural and growing communities.

This approach maintains affordability and equity, supports customer choice, and ensures Minnesotans continue to have reliable heating options that are essential in our cold climate. A hearing is expected to be scheduled in the next few months for the PUC to make a final decision on the policy.

ECO Triennial Plans and Public Input

The Commission will also be managing a busy schedule of **Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Triennial Plans** for 2027–2030. These plans, required under Minnesota law, outline how utilities will achieve energy savings, reduce emissions, and integrate beneficial electrification programs over the coming three-year cycle. The PUC is expected to open public **comment opportunities in 2026**, giving stakeholders a chance to weigh in on how utilities design and fund conservation and clean heat initiatives.

New Natural Gas Integrated Resource Planning Timelines

At the same time, Minnesota's **Integrated Resource Planning (IRP)** cycle will shape the state's long-term energy mix. These are new mandated planning instruments for the state's natural gas utilities. Several key filings are scheduled in the next few years:

- **Xcel Energy** is due to file the first natural gas IRP in **2026**
- **CenterPoint Energy's** IRP follows in **2027**
- **Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (MERC)** will submit its plan in **2028**

Each of these filings will open extensive comment periods, giving regulators, policymakers, and the public a window into how utilities intend to meet Minnesota's climate goals while maintaining reliability and affordability.

BLUE FLAME HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT THE "ONE THAT GOT AWAY" FROM THE BLUE FLAME FISHING EVENT OR THAT "SHOT ON THE 8TH HOLE" FROM THE BLUE FLAME GOLF EVENT. OR JUST GET CAUGHT UP WITH BLUE FLAME GAS ASSOCIATION COLLEAGUES.



DECEMBER 18, 2025
3:30 – 5:00 PM

TWIN CITIES 400 TAVERN
1330 INDUSTRIAL BLVD #400,
MINNEAPOLIS 55413

RSVP
REQUESTED
BUT NOT
REQUIRED



Time to VOTE!

Please take a moment and vote for members of the Blue Flame Gas Association Board of Directors.

CAST YOUR VOTE NOW

Upcoming Events

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Holiday Happy Hour — Twin Cities 400 Tavern

Thursday, June 11, 2026

Blue Flame Golfing Event — Cannon Golf Club

Thursday, Aug. 27 - Labor Day, Monday Sept. 7, 2026

Blue Flame Lodge at the MN State Fair

Blue Flame Board of Directors

- Todd Berreman CenterPoint Energy
- Patrick Berger..... Xcel Energy
- Tom Danley Harris Company
- Rob Gleason, Sec.-Treas.. Austin Utilities
- Jim Hoch..... Standby Systems, Inc.
- Joe Mozeika..... Mulcahy Company
- Greg Olson, President Auer Steel and Heating Supply
- Megan Stock..... MDU/Great Plains Natural Gas
- Eric Todd Encore Energy Services
- Shawn Walls, Vice Pres.... MN Energy Resources Corp.
- Annette Henkel, Ex. Dir... MN Blue Flame Gas Assn.

Interested in Joining Us?

Associate member dues are \$200 per year.

Benefits to Joining:

- Networking Opportunities
- Industry Contacts
- Advertising Opportunities
- Member rates for Association events
- Opportunity to exhibit at the State Fair

CONTACT [AHENKEL@BLUEFLAME.ORG](mailto:ahenkel@blueflame.org)

Let us know...

If you have something to submit or an address change.

If you would like to submit information to be considered for the next member newsletter or have an address change, contact Annette at ahenkel@blueflame.org



Greg Olson

Business Development Manager
865 Xenium Lane N
Plymouth, MN 55441
Direct: (763) 450-9215 Cell: (612) 508-3173
greg.olson@auersteel.com
auersteel.com



**Changing Lives with Energy Providing
Natural Gas to Rural Minnesota Since 1995**

1900 Cardinal Lane, Faribault, MN 55021
888-931-3411 | www.greatermngas.com



2685-145th St W
Rosemount, MN 55068
P: 651.322.8912E:
shawn.walls@minnesotaenergyresources.com
W: www.minnesotaenergyresources.com



7145 Boone Ave N, 200B
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428
P: 763.473.4640
E: bhauck@rmcotton.com
W: www.rmcotton.com

**YOUR BUSINESS IS UNIQUE.
HOW YOU SAVE ENERGY WILL BE TOO.**

Visit xcelenergy.com/Business to learn more.

ALWAYS *delivering.*



Matt Haley
Vice President
FrontierEnergy, Inc.
MHaley@FrontierEnergy.com
612.598.8743

7935 Stone Creek Dr. Suite 140 | Chanhasseen MN 55317 | FrontierEnergy.com

TOM DANLEY **HARRIS**
VP, SERVICE + BUILDING AUTOMATION

909 MONTREAL CIRCLE | ST. PAUL, MN 55102

C: 651.602.6663 | O: 612.363.3200

EMERGENCY SERVICE: 651.602.6606

E: tdanley@harriscompany.com

MULCAHY 651-686-8580 mulcahyco.com

INDUSTRY INNOVATION THROUGH
**HEATING & DOMESTIC
WATER SOLUTIONS**

As a leading manufacturer's representative in the Upper Midwest, Mulcahy offers a superior combination of training, dedicated staff, and a broad product portfolio.



1313 Plymouth Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411-4065
USA
www.standby.com

Jim Hoch
Vice President

jrhoch@standby.com
P: 612.721.4473
F: 612.724.8434



3460 Washington Drive #210
Eagan, MN 55122

c. 612.720.7681
ahenkel@blueflame.org
www.blueflame.org