



March 24, 2020

Dear Local Official:

Re: Request for coordinated response

Thank you for your proactive leadership in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. The forthright actions taken by state and local leaders have been difficult, but necessary to protect our communities during this national emergency. We are writing today to provide you an update on our pandemic response actions taken to date and our anticipated needs as a lifeline infrastructure provider in your community, including a request to participate in your local coordinated response efforts.

As a provider of critical energy services in your community, Black Hills Energy is determined to serve our customers and support essential governmental, health care and other critical functions. We already have taken steps to prepare and respond to the current emergency. These steps include participation in U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), state and local emergency management operations to prepare and activate response plans. These protocols appropriately recognize natural gas and electric service as fundamental factors in ensuring public safety as our nation responds to the pandemic.

Black Hills Energy also is anticipating future needs that may require additional support of federal, state and local resources. Below is background on our efforts thus far as well as future anticipated needs to protect our frontline employees serving customers and critical functions for maintaining electric and natural gas service.

### **Black Hills Energy Pandemic Response**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic Black Hills Energy has activated our corporate response team to focus efforts on its highest priority: the health and safety of employees, customers, business partners and the communities we serve. We also activated our business continuity plan and took steps to ensure we continue to provide customers the safe, essential energy they need and expect. We are planning for operations that would be limited by a significantly smaller workforce, a threatened supply chain and limited support services for an unknown period.

The business continuity and pandemic plans developed by our electric and gas utilities are designed to protect the people working for them and ensure operations and infrastructure are supported properly throughout an emergency. To date, Black Hills

Energy has not experienced any significant impacts on the delivery of energy to our 1.3 million utility customers.

To support customers that may be impacted by COVID-19, Black Hills Energy is temporarily suspending nonpayment disconnections for our customers. We are also reminding customers that face financial hardship that there are various assistance options and programs available to help them.

Additional actions we have taken include:

- Implement protocols for our field operations personnel to continue to safely and effectively interact with our customers, including additional screening questions for customers needing in-person assistance.
- Ask all employees to work from home to the extent possible.
- Require sick employees to stay home.
- Quarantine employees with the COVID-19 virus or if they were traveling to at-risk areas.
- Limit travel to mission critical purposes.
- Postpone all on-site consultants and large group gatherings.
- Encourage all employees to practice social distancing.
- Encourage the use of electronic communication whenever possible.
- Provide paid leave in situations where either an employee tests positive for COVID-19 or is put under quarantine.

### **Black Hills Energy Pandemic Response Needs**

Electric and gas utilities are basic lifeline infrastructure and are critical to ensure essential services are maintained and front-line workers are protected. Fulfilling these needs will help to guarantee that lifeline infrastructure entities that provide for the underlying needs of society can continue to provide safe and reliable service.

The DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is responsible for providing strategic guidance as assigned under the Homeland Security Act of 2002. CISA recently published “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers,” as a resource for state and local officials as they work to protect their communities while ensuring continuity of functions critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security. CISA has identified natural gas and electric utility workers as “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” for the energy industry. Specific functions accompany the listing. <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>.

**Coordinated Response:** It’s vital that we work together throughout this event and we request that Black Hills Energy local leadership is invited to participate in your local response coordination discussions to ensure our response as an essential service is fully coordinated to continue meeting the needs of the community.

Medical Services & Equipment Prioritization: Lifeline sectors must continue to engage the public throughout an emergency, including entering into communities, businesses, or homes that may have contagions in order to maintain or repair systems. Prioritized access to vaccinations and testing before the general public will help increase their safety, as well as the safety of the general public with whom they must engage. Similarly, prioritization for access to personal protective equipment, such as N95 respirator masks, before the general public would help reduce the chance of significant impacts on our workforce's ability to continue to support these critical infrastructure lifeline functions.

Safe Community Quarantine Reentry: To prepare for the possible eventuality of more quarantined communities, local planning processes need to consider priority reentry procedures for lifeline critical infrastructure entities in the event of an outage or emergency. In some cases, front-line workers responding to an emergency – like a downed power line or a suspected gas leak - will need to access quarantined communities, homes, and businesses.

Mutual Assistance: In a health emergency, lifeline sectors may need to share essential personnel, such as control room operators, with each other to address workforce shortages. Travel and regulatory waivers will be essential to the timely movement and sharing of personnel, especially when crossing state lines is necessary. In addition, there may be needs for assistance from the National Guard or other government personnel to assist in providing security or other assistance to protect critical infrastructure.

Supplemental Support: Black Hills Energy asks for your consideration to support critical facilities should circumstances require resources beyond private sector capabilities to ensure continued safe and reliable operations. Such areas may include physical security protection services of critical facilities, personnel security, continued access to personal protection equipment (PPE), and other business essentials to support critical facilities operations.

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, Black Hills Energy will continue to take action in order to keep energy flowing to our customers, and in support of essential needs across the communities we serve. Thank you for your partnership in protecting the health and safety of the public. Please do not hesitate to contact your local community affairs manager Carly West at [carly.west@blackhillscorp.com](mailto:carly.west@blackhillscorp.com). We welcome the opportunity to participate in your local response efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Bailey, Vice President of Colorado Gas Operations