



**NEWS
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Xcel Energy raises bar with unmanned aircraft surveys

Texas drone flight to be first beyond operator's line of sight for utility survey

AMARILLO, Texas – Xcel Energy, a leader in the use of unmanned aircraft systems to inspect energy infrastructure, will be the first utility in the nation to fly a research and development mission that is beyond the operator's line of sight when it surveys a transmission line near Amarillo, Texas, today.

Xcel Energy inspects more than 320,000 miles of electricity and natural gas infrastructure to ensure the safety and reliability of its energy system, and helicopters have been the primary means of accessing lines in rugged terrain. In 2015, Xcel Energy began a program of visually inspecting substations in Texas with unmanned aircraft, commonly known as drones, which are operated within the line of sight of the operator. Today, the company is using contractors, Environmental Consultants Inc. & FLÖT Systems, to fly an unmanned inspection using a system that allows the aircraft to fly beyond the line of sight of the operator, a first for U.S. electric utility companies.

Xcel Energy has more than 7,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines in its Texas-New Mexico service area alone. This first beyond-line-of-sight unmanned aircraft mission will be flown in an area known as the Canadian River Breaks north of Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle.

“Xcel Energy is committed to embracing new technologies that allow us to work safer, more efficiently and at lower costs than before, and the unmanned aircraft systems are a great example of boosting our productivity through technology,” said Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy's senior vice president for transmission. “Employees will also use drones to observe environmentally sensitive areas without the use of trucks, helicopters or other utility equipment, minimizing the environmental impact,” she added.

Xcel Energy (NYSE: XEL) is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company with regulated operations in eight Western and Midwestern states. Xcel Energy provides a comprehensive portfolio of energy-related products and services to 3.5 million electricity customers and 2 million natural gas customers through its regulated operating companies. Company headquarters are located in Minneapolis. More information is available at www.xcelenergy.com.

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