

DENVER POST, FEBRUARY 6, 2003

legislature 2003
Bill requires cut in electricity sales

By **Steve Raabe**

Denver Post Business Writer

Thursday, February 06, 2003 - Xcel Energy would be required to reduce sales of electricity by 1 percent a year under a bill in the Colorado legislature.

Proponents of the energy-efficiency measure said it would save Colorado consumers and businesses more than \$1 billion by 2020, and reduce the amount of water used to generate electricity.

The bill doesn't specifically name Xcel, Colorado's largest electricity supplier. However, Xcel is the only utility big enough to be covered under the legislation's minimum-power requirements.

Xcel would achieve the target by helping customers design energy-efficient structures, and by offering rebates for efficient lighting and appliances, among other mechanisms.

"This bill is a win-win opportunity for consumers, businesses and the environment in Colorado," said the bill's sponsor, state Sen. Peggy Reeves, D-Fort Collins. "And saving electricity means saving water since conventional power plants use a great deal of water in electricity production."

Xcel Energy officials responded that the utility already has an energy-efficiency program in place that is expected to shave 2 percent off peak electrical demand by 2005.

One of the program's components is Saver's Switch, under which 15,000 Denver-area customers voluntarily have agreed to let Xcel cycle their home air conditioners on and off during the hottest days of summer.

Fred Stoffel, Xcel's vice president of policy development, said the utility should not be forced to reduce electrical demand.

"Our customers are in the best position to determine whether it is worth their while to make investments in efficiency," he said. "While Xcel Energy supports the wise use of energy, consumption decisions occur on the customer's side of the meter - and the utility should not be mandated to invest capital in efficiency equipment."

Howard Geller of the Boulder-based Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, a nonprofit energy-conservation group, said the bill is fair because it applies the same efficiency mandates that Minneapolis-based Xcel has in place for Minnesota customers.

"Given the success that Xcel has demonstrated in operating under these rules in Minnesota, one has to ask, why are they not providing Coloradans with the same standard of services and programs?" Geller said.