BLACK HILLS ENERGY ADVISES IOWA NATURAL GAS CUSTOMERS TO KEEP SNOW AWAY FROM OUTSIDE FURNACE VENTS AND METERS

DUBUQUE, Iowa, Feb. 2, 2011 – Due to recent heavy snowfall in regions of Iowa, Black Hills Energy encourages customers to carefully clear away snow by hand from the outdoor vents of side-vented, high-efficiency furnaces. Furnaces will not run properly if the vents are blocked.

The company also reminds customers to be mindful of the utility equipment on their property and to keep the natural gas meter clear of snow so it can operate safely and accurately. Natural gas meters and regulators are manufactured to operate under normal winter conditions. While a light ice coating or snow buildup should not affect a natural gas meter, Black Hills Energy reminds customers to remove heavy snow from the meter and the surrounding area, but to exercise care so the equipment is not damaged.

Other safety advice from Black Hills Energy:

• Carefully clear away snow by hand from the outdoor vents of a side-vented, high-efficiency furnace. Furnaces will not run properly if the vents are blocked.

• Do not use a snow blower or shovel in close proximity to the natural gas meter set or piping and do not pile snow on the meter set. Clear any snow from the meter and piping and from around the natural gas equipment by hand or with a broom. Do not attempt to remove or chip away ice from the natural gas meter. If there is concern about ice buildup on the meter, call the Black Hills Energy emergency number at 800-694-8989 so that an experienced utility service professional can inspect the meter, free of charge.

• Make snow removal contractors or personnel aware of meters so they don’t accidentally hit a natural gas meter or piping. Natural gas service is safe and meters are durable, but hitting the meter or piping with a shovel or other snow removal equipment could damage the meter, potentially causing a natural gas leak or a disruption of service.

“For those who have a meter buried in snow, it’s generally as simple as clearing away the snow periodically and before it freezes,” said Mark Ernst, Black Hills Energy operations manager. “Regardless of the season, we encourage customers to keep their natural gas meter accessible at all times so that an accurate reading can be made and the meter is easy to locate and service.

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“If you smell natural gas inside a building, leave the home or business immediately and once outside the building, call Black Hills Energy’s emergency number from a neighbor’s home or from a cell phone,” Ernst said. “Do not switch on or off any lights as you exit. If there is a natural gas leak in the house or business, a spark of any kind could ignite it and cause personal injury and property damage.”

If you smell gas outdoors, move away from the area and call the Black Hills Energy emergency number, 800-694-8989, and watch for the arrival of emergency personnel.

Black Hills/Iowa Gas Utility Company, LLC d/b/a Black Hills Energy
Black Hills Energy serves 149,700 natural gas customers in 130 Iowa communities and is a recipient of the U.S. EPA 2010 ENERGY STAR® Leadership in Housing Award. Black Hills Energy is a subsidiary of Black Hills Corp. — a diversified energy company with a tradition of exemplary service and a vision to be the energy partner of choice — based in Rapid City, S.D., with corporate offices in Denver and Omaha, Neb. Black Hills Corp. serves 763,300 natural gas and electric utility customers in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming, and its non-regulated businesses generate wholesale electricity, produce natural gas, oil and coal, and market energy. Black Hills’ 2,200 employees partner to produce results that improve life with energy. More information is available at www.blackhillscorp.com.

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