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### **BLACK HILLS ENERGY ADVISES NEBRASKA CUSTOMERS TO KEEP SNOW AWAY FROM NATURAL GAS METERS SO THEY OPERATE SAFELY**

LINCOLN, Neb., Jan. 7, 2010 – Natural gas meters and regulators are manufactured to operate under normal winter conditions but with all the recent snows this winter season in Nebraska, Black Hills Energy encourages customers to be mindful of the utility equipment on their property and to keep natural gas meters clear of snow so they operate safely.

While a light ice coating or snow buildup should not affect an outdoor natural gas meter set, with the significant amounts of snow piling up, Black Hills Energy also reminds customers to be careful when removing snow from the meter and the area around the meter so the equipment is not damaged.

The meter should remain visible at all times and easily accessible so that in the event of an emergency or other issues, the shut-off valve is easy to locate and service.

“When the meter is visible, it helps Black Hills Energy technicians, the police and the fire department access the meter quickly and fix any problems,” said Dan Mechtenberg, Black Hills Energy vice president of Nebraska operations.

If there is snow on the meter either due to drifting or previous snow removal, customers can brush it away by hand or remove it with a brush, but they should not use a shovel. 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 or piping causing a natural gas leak or a disruption of service.

“For those who have buried meters, it’s generally as simple as clearing away the snow periodically and before it freezes,” said Mechtenberg. “Regardless of the season, we

always encourage customers to keep their natural gas meter and shut-off valve visible and accessible at all times.”

While removing snow carefully from the meter is encouraged, customers should not attempt to remove or chip away ice from the natural gas meter set. If there’s ice buildup on the meter, or there is concern about ice buildup on the piping, customers should 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.

If a customer smells natural gas, they should leave their 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. In addition, if there is a smell of natural gas, do not take time to turn off any lights as the premises are exited. If there is natural gas in the house or business, a spark of any kind could ignite it and cause personal injury and property damage. Other safety advice from Black Hills Energy:

- Do not use a snow blower 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.
- Create awareness with snow removal contractors so they know the location of meter sets on the property and don’t accidentally hit a natural gas meter or piping, causing a natural gas leak.
- Carefully clear away snow by hand from the vents of a side-vented, high-efficiency furnace. Furnaces may not run if the vents are blocked.

Black Hills Energy serves 197,400 natural gas customers in 110 eastern Nebraska communities. Black Hills Energy is part of Black Hills Corp. (NYSE: BKH) — 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. The company serves 759,000 natural gas and electric utility customers in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming. The company’s non-regulated businesses generate wholesale electricity, produce natural gas, oil and coal, and market energy. Black Hills employees partner to produce results that improve life with energy. More information is available at [www.blackhillscorp.com](http://www.blackhillscorp.com).

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