

OPINION

NSP calls on experts to answer critics

To the editor:

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board on Aug. 19 approved its staff's recommendation that no further study was needed on Northern States Power Co.'s proposed electric transmission line project in the Morristown area. Time did not permit consideration of the staff's similar recommendation for a transmission project in the southeast metro area. This area includes Sunfish Lake, South St. Paul, Inver Grove Heights and Mendota Heights, where local opponents are concerned there could be negative health effects from power lines and the electric or magnetic fields (EMF) they create.

The staff recommendation is another in a long and consistent series of decisions by Minnesota policy-makers that affirms the adequacy of existing research on the health effects issues.

This is important to all NSP customers because a series of electric transmission line upgrades are becoming necessary in the next several years to sustain power reliability in high demand growth areas, and to minimize outages from storms or equipment problems in the metro area.

The recent action of the MEQB on the Morristown-

area project and the staff recommendation on the Sunfish Lake-area project are well founded on the latest science and also meet the public interests of safe and reliable electric power in our metro area. The simple fact is that after more than 30 years of intensive research on power lines and EMF, and recent examination of that body of research by our country's most prestigious government research organizations, there is no evidence of health effects from power lines or exposure to EMF, even at high levels.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Science in its June 1999 report states, "The scientific evidence suggesting that EMF exposures pose any health risk is weak." It also states, "Virtually all of the laboratory evidence in animals and humans, and most of the mechanistic work done in cells, fails to support a causal relationship between exposure to EMF at environmental levels and changes in biological function or disease status."

Unfortunately, even these scientific findings do not stop opponents from alleging precisely the opposite. We all must recognize that opponents are arguing their personal opinions about EMF against the overwhelming scientific facts established by our nation's most respected medical and public health institutions.

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