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- Special to the Leader & Times

Lawrence — Black Hills Energy employees help out wherever and whenever they're needed — even if it's a state away.

In fact, nine of the utility's employees from offices in Wichita and southwest Kansas traveled to Colorado to help restore service to customers who were impacted by wildfires in the Black Forest region. Larry Claycomb, Ron Flowers, Rod Smith, Ray Ortega, Salvador Angeles, Donald McPhail, Mike Traylor, Everett Rogers and Bill Dahna volunteered to help out the company's sister utility in Colorado. They received notification that their support was needed on the evening of June 13, and all nine left for Colorado the next morning.

"We want to thank the Kansas employees for volunteering to assist us," said Susan Bailey, general manager for Black Hills Energy's gas operations in Colorado. "They had great attitudes and worked very long hours to take care of customers. It meant a lot to us that our teammates from other states were just a phone call away to help us out."

The nine Kansas employees reported to Black Hills Energy's Monument, Colo., service center and have been working from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day to restore natural gas service to almost 4,000 customers. Thanks in part to their efforts, the utility made significant progress, and all of the Kansas employees are expected to return by June 21.

"The Colorado team had everything well organized and made sure we had everything we needed — ample supplies, food and water," said Claycomb, compliance supervisor for Black Hills Energy's Kansas operations. "Even though some residents had lost their homes, they always expressed their gratitude for our efforts on their behalf."

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