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Xcel Energy urges safety near dams with start of Wisconsin's 2026 fishing season

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (April 27, 2026) – With Wisconsin's fishing season opening Saturday, Xcel Energy is reminding anglers, boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts to use caution around dams and hydroelectric facilities.

Boating, canoeing or recreating above or below a dam can be dangerous—especially during periods of high or rapidly changing river flows. On Lake Wissota in Chippewa Falls, high water levels have delayed installation of boat barriers, which are expected to be installed later next week.

“Unfortunately, there have been far more fatalities from accidents at dams than from dam failures,” said Rob Olson, Hydro Operations at Xcel Energy. “If you’re operating a boat near a dam, you need to be aware that flow conditions can change quickly from spillways or powerhouses. Anyone recreating near a dam should stay alert and be prepared to respond immediately to changing water conditions.”

Xcel Energy is a member of the Midwest Hydro Users Group (HUG), an association of dam owners that promotes the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible use of hydroelectric power. The group encourages people to enjoy Wisconsin's rivers while keeping safety a top priority and offers these reminders for recreating near dams:

- Obey all warning signs, barriers, flashing lights, sirens and horns.
- Always wear a personal flotation device (life jacket).
- Stay outside buoy lines and away from restricted areas.
- Never swim or wade near a dam.
- Avoid boating or fishing alone near dams.
- Keep your boat motor running to maintain maneuverability.
- Stay clear of spillways, where changing currents and “boiling” waves can make control difficult.
- Be aware that reverse currents below dams can pull boats toward spillways and cause capsizing.
- Never anchor below a dam, where water levels can rise rapidly.
- Closely supervise children and clearly explain where they can and cannot go.

For more safety information, visit [Xcel Energy Hydro Safety](#).

Xcel Energy operates 19 hydroelectric plants in Wisconsin on eight rivers, with a combined generating capacity of approximately 270 megawatts. In addition to warning sirens on the Namekagon River, Xcel Energy operates nine sirens along the lower Chippewa River from Holcombe Flowage to the City of Eau Claire; two along the lower Red Cedar River near Menomonie; one below the Apple River hydro plant near Somerset; and two below Winter Dam. More information is available at www.xcelenergy.com