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Utilities United Against Scams Joins National Consumer Protection Week to Raise Awareness of Utility Scams

Washington, DC (March 5, 2018) – National Consumer Protection Week kicks off this week, and Utilities United Against Scams is continuing its efforts to remind customers of the tricks scammers use to steal money from customers and to educate them on how they can guard against falling victim to imposter utility scams.

“In a world with constantly improving technological innovations, it’s critical that customers stay ahead of the ever-expanding array of threats posed by scammers,” said Utilities United Against Scams Executive Director and former State Utility Consumer Advocate for Texas Sheri Givens. “The broad collaboration behind Utilities United Against Scams, including its recent partnership with the Federal Trade Commission, is helping to shine a light on this important issue and is providing resources for customers to recognize scams and avoid becoming victims.”

Utilities United Against Scams is a collaborative consisting of more than 100 natural gas, electric, and water utility companies across the country and Canada. Members of Utilities United Against Scams work across the utility industry and with regulators, law enforcement, and other telecommunications partners to help stop scams targeting utility customers.

Signs of Potential Scam Activity:

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell a customer his or her utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made – usually within less than an hour.
- **Request for immediate payment:** Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card – widely available at retail stores – then call them back supposedly to make a bill payment to his or her utility company.
- **Request for prepaid card:** When the customer calls back, the caller asks the customer for the prepaid card’s number, which grants the scammer instant access to the card’s funds, and the victim’s money is gone.

How Customers Can Protect Themselves:

- Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. Legitimate utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment and always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail, or in person.
- If someone threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door. Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification, typically by mail and included with their regular monthly bill. Companies never send a single notification one hour or less before disconnection.
- If customers suspect someone is trying to scam them, they should hang up, delete the email, or shut the door. They should call their utility company at the number on their monthly bill or the company's website, not the phone number the scammer provides. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 911.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scammers, should contact local law enforcement authorities.

The [Federal Trade Commission's website](#) is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

Visit **www.utilitiesunited.org** for more information and tips about how customers can protect themselves from scams or follow along on social media: **Twitter** [@U U A S](#) and **Facebook** [@UtilitiesUnited](#)

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Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) is a consortium of more than 100 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities (and their respective trade associations). UUAS is dedicated to combating impostor utility scams by providing a forum for utilities and trade associations to share data and best practices, in addition to working together to implement initiatives to inform and protect customers.