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**UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS RECOGNIZES THE SECOND ANNUAL  
UTILITY SCAM AWARENESS DAY**

**UUAS RELEASES CUSTOMER SCAM AWARENESS AND EDUCATION GUIDE**

**WASHINGTON (November 13, 2017)** – Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS), a consortium of more than 100 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities (and their respective trade associations), continues to raise awareness of utility scams targeting customers. The second annual Utility Scam Awareness Day will be held Wednesday, November 15, and is supported by a week-long advocacy and awareness campaign focused on exposing the tactics scammers use to steal money from utility customers and on educating customers on how to protect themselves.

“Raising awareness and educating customers about scams is UUAS’s top priority,” said Duke Energy’s Vice President of Customer Operations for Piedmont Natural Gas and Metering Services and UUAS Chair Jared Lawrence. “UUAS will continue to help spread awareness of the malicious and frequently evolving tactics that scammers use to target customers. It is important that customers call their utilities directly to check on the status of their accounts if they are ever unsure about the authenticity of a caller or the identity of a service worker, or if they suspect any fraudulent activity.”

“Water utility customers are particularly susceptible to impostors claiming they need to gain entry to homes to physically check the water meter or pipes located inside the home,” said Assistant Manager of Customer Service at Middlesex Water Company and UUAS Vice Chair Joseph Herits. “We strongly encourage our customers to act with caution and to ask for a company photo ID before allowing any worker into their home or business. If there is still concern or doubt, customers should call their utilities’ Customer Service Department to verify the activity at their home or business. We value our customer’s. The resources available through UUAS will go a long way to helping consumers better protect themselves.”

“Electric, water, and natural gas services are vital to our everyday lives, and scammers are continually attempting to profit from utility customers,” said Xcel Energy Communications Consultant and UUAS Vice Chair Tim Dicks. “Scammers are developing increasingly sophisticated schemes to take advantage of customers, especially those most vulnerable in our society, including lower-income households and elderly individuals and communities.”

Today, UUAS also released a report titled, “[Consumer’s Guide to Impostor Utility Scams](#),” authored by UUAS Executive Director and former Texas Utility Consumer Advocate Sheri

Givens. The Guide highlights some of the most frequent formats of impostor utility scams, in which customers receive unsolicited telephone, electronic, and in-person communications from an individual claiming to be a utility company representative. In some cases, scammers extort payments from customers by threatening to disconnect or shutoff service immediately. To complicate matters, scammers increasingly have become adept at disguising themselves as utility company representatives.

“The consumer scam guide highlights common types of scams and how customers can better protect themselves, their neighbors, and their families from fraudulent threats,” said Givens. “It is important to call attention to, and educate all, on the deceptive schemes scammers use.”

### **Signs of Potential Scam Activity:**

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell the 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 then 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](http://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](https://twitter.com/U_U_A_S) and **Facebook** [@UtilitiesUnited](https://www.facebook.com/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.*