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

Washington, D.C. (March 4, 2019) – It is National Consumer Protection Week, and Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) is continuing its efforts to educate customers on how they can guard against falling victim to imposter utility scams. UUAS is supporting the Federal Trade Commission’s week-long advocacy and awareness campaign by reinforcing its efforts to expose the tactics scammers use to steal money from utility customers and educating customers on how to protect themselves.

UUAS, a consortium of 125 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas companies and their respective trade associations, works across the industry with regulators, law enforcement, and other telecommunications partners to stop scams targeting utility customers. In 2018, UUAS and its member companies helped to shut down more than 2,000 toll-free numbers used by scammers to target utility customers. In October, the group was awarded the Toll-Free Industry’s [Fraud Fighter Award](#) in recognition of its advocacy and awareness campaigns to stop scams.

“Organizations join Utilities United Against Scams to help protect their customers and communities against fraud, and the impact of the coalition’s efforts to combat imposter utility scams is evident,” said UUAS Executive Director Monica Martinez. “The amount of fraudulent toll-free numbers reported by utilities account for roughly half of all numbers reported. In addition to our work shutting down fraudulent toll-free numbers, UUAS also will continue to highlight the most common scam tactics and provide resources to help utility customers better protect themselves from imposter utility scammers.”

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 a 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 125 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.