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

WASHINGTON (March 1, 2020) – Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) this week recognizes National Consumer Protection Week and continues to educate customers on how they can guard against falling victim to imposter utility scams.

UUAS is a consortium of 146 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities and their respective trade associations that works across the industry with regulators, law enforcement, and telecommunications partners to stop scams targeting utility customers.

UUAS and its member companies continue to create awareness of common and new scam tactics and, to date, have helped to cease operations of more than 6,000 toll-free numbers used against utility customers by scammers.

"Scammers can rob customers of their hard-earned money and, in a worst-case scenario, leave them struggling to make ends meet for their household or small business," said UUAS Executive Director Monica Martinez. "UUAS helps utility companies educate their customers so they don't fall victim to fraud and scams. We work to shut down fraudulent toll-free numbers, highlight common scam tactics, and provide resources to customers to help them better protect themselves from scammers who steal their money and their peace of mind."

Signs of Potential Scam Activity:

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell a customer that his or her utility bill is past due and that service will be disconnected if a payment is not made. Typically, the scammer will tell the customer that a disconnection will come within an hour.
- **Request for immediate payment via prepaid card:** Scammers may instruct a customer to purchase a prepaid card and call a number to make an immediate bill payment to his or her utility company. Once the funds are received from a prepaid card, there is no way to refund or reverse the transaction.
- **Fraudulent electronic communications:** Scammers may disguise themselves as the utility by sending spam emails with logos, trademarks, website links, and wording to lure the customer into making a false payment or providing personal information.

How Customers Can Protect Themselves:

- Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. Utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment, and they always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill, including online, phone, automatic bank draft, mail, or in-person payments.
- 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 within one hour of service disconnection.
- If customers suspect a scammer, they should double check by calling 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 9-1-1.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during contact with a scammer should contact their local utility company or law enforcement authorities. The Federal Trade Commission's [website](#) also provides additional information about protecting personal information and other information regarding impostor scams.

Visit www.utilitiesunited.org for more information and tips on how customers can protect themselves from impostor utility scams, and follow along with UUAS on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) is a consortium of 146 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.