

## Utilities Recognize Annual Scam Awareness Day

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Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) and its members are proud to recognize and to highlight the sixth annual Utility Scam Awareness Day on November 17. This year's campaign – 'End the Call. End the Scam.' – focuses on utility impostor scam calls and the advanced tactics that are being used to target customers. Since the pandemic began, the number of scams has escalated, and scammers have increased their efforts to take advantage of utility customers and the financial challenges that many have faced.

Customers should know that utilities will never call to demand immediate payment, and they will never ask for personal information over the phone. Utilities also will never ask customers to pay their bills with pre-paid cards, crypto currencies, or by using third-party payment apps, such as CashApp, Venmo, or Zelle.

If you receive a suspicious call from a possible scammer, please remember the following tips:

- **Slow down.** Scammers typically try to rush customers and will ask for personal information and immediate payment.
- **Verify.** Scammers often pose as utility company employees. If the scammer is on the phone, make sure they can verify they are with the utility or can verify your account information. If you are unsure, hang up and contact the utility directly by using the information on your most recent bill or the utility's website.
- **Stop before you act.** Think about the information the caller is asking of you. If it seems unsafe or incorrect, rethink the situation and ask questions.

Please remember that utility scammers can be extremely sophisticated, and they often use strategies that can make customers believe they are not an impostor. Here are few common scams and tips for customers to protect themselves:

- Scammers often threaten **immediate service disconnections**. They ask for personal information or demand payments to prevent service interruptions.
- Scammers have been taking advantage of increased online activities during the pandemic. They are asking for **payments over the phone by using digital payment apps, cryptocurrencies, or direct transactions with banking institutions**.
- Scammers are using tactics to prey on households with tight budgets. Scammers will inform customers that they have **overpaid utility bills and are due a refund**, but first they need to provide their banking information to process the refund. They also may claim that **immediate bill payment will result in a discount or that a charitable donation** can be made in exchange for a lesser bill payment.
- Scammers also are posing as utility employees by claiming the number on the **caller ID does not match the utility's phone number due to the company's COVID-19 remote work policies**.

It is important for utility customers to understand the types of threats that exist and to remember that anyone can be targeted. Utilities and customers must continue to be vigilant and to raise awareness. Together, we can #StopScams.

Visit the [Utilities United Against Scams website](#) for more information, and be sure to follow us on [Twitter](#) and on [Facebook](#) for additional tips and alerts.