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## **Utilities United Against Scams Raises Awareness During National Consumer Protection Week**

**WASHINGTON (February 28, 2021)** – Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) this week recognizes National Consumer Protection Week and continues to educate customers on how they can guard against becoming victims of impostor 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 with regulators, law enforcement, and telecommunications partners to stop scams targeting utility customers.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, scammers have increased calls, texts, emails, and in-person tactics, and they continue to contact utility customers asking for immediate payment to avoid service disconnection. Local utility companies will never send a single notification to a customer within one hour of a service disconnection, and they will never ask customers to make payments with a prepaid debit card, gift card, any form of cryptocurrency, or third-party digital payment mobile applications.

“Even in the middle of a pandemic that is affecting everyone and causing economic hardship for many, we still are dealing with scammers who are preying on families and small businesses,” said UUAS Executive Director Monica Martinez. “UUAS is working directly with utility companies to help educate customers so they can be aware of the dangers of utility scams and avoid them during these trying times.”

Through its work and with the help of customer reporting, UUAS has succeeded in taking out of operation more than 10,000 toll-free numbers used by scammers against utility customers. UUAS and our member companies remain committed to creating awareness of common and new scam tactics throughout the pandemic and beyond.

“We are shutting down fraudulent toll-free numbers, highlighting current and common scam tactics, and providing educational resources to customers to help them better protect themselves from the impostors who attempt to steal their money and their peace of mind,” Martinez added.

## TACTICS:

- **Fraudulent phone numbers:** Scammers are claiming the phone number is different than the number listed on the utility bill due to telework status.
- **Fraudulent emails and texts:** Scammers are using written correspondence to portray themselves as the utility.
- **Door-to-door impostors:** Scammers are claiming they are “responding to reports that scammers are in the neighborhood.”



## SCAMS:

- **Disconnection threat:** The utility or government representative impostor aggressively tells the customer his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if immediate payment is not made—typically using a prepaid debit card or another non-refundable form of payment.
- **Meter payment:** The caller or in-person scammer instructs the customer to pay with cash or a prepaid debit card to cover the costs of a new meter or a meter upgrade.
- **Information request:** The caller insists that a recent payment encountered a system glitch and was not completed—the scammer then asks the customer to make a false payment using a prepaid debit card or by providing personal account information.



Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during contact with a scammer should notify 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](http://www.utilitiesunited.org) for more information and tips on how customers can protect themselves from impostor utility scams. Follow along with UUAS on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and join the conversation by using #StopScams.

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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.*