

ComEd Utility Scam Toolkit

ComEd joined forces with other Illinois Energy and Gas Companies, and dozens of natural gas and energy companies across the United States and Canada to designate November 15 “Utilities United Against Scams Day.” This day, supported by a week-long campaign with online and social media content, is focused on exposing the tricks scammers use to steal money from customers, and how customers can protect themselves. The effort, which includes utility member organizations such as Edison Electric Institute and American Gas Association, encourages utilities to share these messages to help guard against scam activity.

“It’s vital we continue to get the word out about utility scams to help protect our customers and keep them from becoming victims,” said **Fidel Marquez, senior vice president of Governmental and External Affairs, ComEd**. “We are proud to be a part of this important movement and are committed to continuing our efforts to create awareness and inform our customers on how to protect themselves against these fraudulent scammers.”

When being scammed, a customer typically receives an unsolicited phone call from an individual who falsely claims to be a utility representative. The scammer warns that the customer’s service will be shut off if the customer fails to make a payment – usually within a short timeframe through a prepaid debit card.

Scammers have even duplicated the upfront Interactive Voice Response system of some utilities, so when customers call the number provided by the scammer, it sounds like a legitimate business. Some of these scammers also use caller ID “spoofing” to replicate a utility’s phone number.

Red flags for scam activity

- The scammer often becomes angry and tells a customer his or her account is past due and service will be shut off if a large payment isn’t made – usually within less than an hour.
- The scammer instructs the customer to purchase a prepaid debit or credit card – widely available at most retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment.
- The scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card’s receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the funds loaded to the card.

How to protect yourself

- Utility representatives will never ask or require a customer with a past due balance to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Customers can make payments online, by phone, automatic bank withdrawal, mail or in person.
- Customers with a past due balance will receive multiple shut off notifications – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.

Don’t Get Scammed: Customers can avoid being scammed by taking a few precautions:

- **Never provide social security numbers or personal information** to anyone initiating contact with you claiming to be a utility representative or requesting you to send money to another person or entity other than your local utility providers.
- **Always ask to see a company photo ID** before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.

- **When in doubt, check it out.** Be skeptical of individuals wearing clothing with old or defaced company logos. If you have any doubts, ask to see a company photo ID.
- **Never make payment for services to anyone coming to the door.**

Anyone who believes he or she has been a target of a phone scam is urged to contact the Illinois Attorney General's office toll free at 1-800-386-5438 (TTY 1-800-964-3013) or visit the Illinois Attorney General's web site at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov and click on the link "Protecting Consumers."

If customers have concerns about the status of their account, they can also contact us:

- ComEd 1-800-EDISON1
- Nicor Gas 1-888-NICOR4U
- Peoples Gas 866-556-6001
- North Shore Gas 866-556-6004