



## Maryland Office of People's Counsel (OPC)

### Beware of Utility-Related Scams

Phone scams and door-to-door scams are nothing new. But it can be scary when these scams impact your utility service or the money you need to pay your utility bills.

**Scammers may increase efforts to get your money during this COVID-19 pandemic, and take advantage of your financial distress.**

**Don't fall for a scam. If you are behind on your gas or electric bill, contact your utility and ask for a payment plan. You also may be eligible for energy assistance through the Office of Home Energy Programs. Check out resource information at [www.opc.maryland.gov](http://www.opc.maryland.gov).**

### Important TIPS for utility customers: You are in control

Some scams try to get money out of you by threatening shut-offs of your gas or electricity. In other situations, marketers may state or imply that they are with your local utility and are conducting a survey, need to check your utility bill or offer you a utility discount – but really are signing you up for an energy supplier agreement without your consent.

Do not turn over any identifying information (SSNs, Account #s, Utility Choice ID #s) over the phone, by email or text message, or to someone at your door. A utility representative will not ask for this information by phone, email or text, and will not ask for payment over the phone, and must have utility ID at your door. Even for a utility employee, you should always call your utility and check to see if an employee is scheduled to come to your home.

At the door, an energy supplier or community solar agent must identify the company, display an ID, and offer a business card with the name of the company and agent. If you ask them to leave, they must leave your premises immediately.

NEVER purchase a prepaid debit card (e.g. Green Dot or MoneyPak) because someone is threatening to shut off your service. If you are behind on your bill, or have received a termination notice, and someone shows up at your door to shut off service, check the utility ID and then call your utility to make sure it is a legitimate technician who can take a check or credit card to avoid the service shut-off.

If you are the victim of a scam, contact your utility, and if a money scam, also contact the police. Remember, once the scammer gets the money, there is no way to get it back. You can also contact the Office of Attorney General to report a scam, or attempted scam.

If you are behind on a utility bill, your utility will send you written notices about past due payments and eventually, a notice of upcoming service termination if a bill remains unpaid. If you do not remember receiving these notices, and someone calls you or shows up at your door with a threat of service termination, call your local utility directly and ask if you are scheduled for a service shut-off.

You should always contact your utility, using the numbers provided by the utility, if you have any question about the legitimacy of a call, home visit, email or text message about overdue bills, meter appointments or the selling of other services. You also can find more information about these types of scams at [www.utilitiesunited.org](http://www.utilitiesunited.org).

If you have a question about a utility-related scam, contact OPC at [DLInfo OPC@maryland.gov](mailto:DLInfo OPC@maryland.gov).