

Office of People's Counsel

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ALERT

UTILITY SCAMS ARE ON THE RISE AGAIN

We are all under different kinds of stress these days. Many households are under stress from loss of employment, loss of income or reduced income due to the pandemic. And here they come again – the scammers. There are scams for COVID-19 “vaccines” and “cures.” And now we are seeing an uptick in utility scams, taking advantage of worries about paying household bills.

The scammers may not come to your door due to the Governor's Emergency Orders, but they may call you.

Here are typical types of phone scams:

- ◇ I'm from your utility, and you will be disconnected unless you make immediate payment through a prepaid debit card.

The scammer is trying to steal your money. A utility cannot disconnect you during the State of Emergency. A utility will never call you to tell you to pay by prepaid card or Western Union to avoid disconnection. A utility must send you disconnection notices before they can terminate your service.

- ◇ I'm from your utility, and I am calling about a refund owed to you by your energy supplier.

A utility will not contact you about an energy supplier, energy bills or any refund from a supplier. The scammer is trying to get personal information or your account number from you.

- ◇ I'm from your utility, and I am calling you about a 30% discount on your energy bill you are entitled to.

A utility's rates are regulated and approved by the Public Service Commission. A utility cannot offer you a discount. The scammer is trying to get personal information or your account number from you.

ALL OF THESE STATEMENTS ARE FALSE AND ARE SCAMS. HANG UP IMMEDIATELY.

Contact your local utility, the Public Service Commission or the Office of People's Counsel to report these types of calls. You can email OPC at DLInfo OPC@maryland.gov.