

Utility Scams

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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. The Office of People’s Counsel has seen an uptick in the number of people encountering scammers. Scammers may increase their efforts to get your money during the 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.

Typical phone scams

- “I’m from your utility. We did not receive your last two checks. Unless you provide your check information now, we will disconnect your utility service.”

The scammer is trying to get your bank account information. A utility will never call you to demand your bank account information to avoid disconnection. Many times, the scammer will call you from a spoofed number and it will look like a local call. If you are concerned about your utility bill, call your utility directly.

- “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 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. If you 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.

- “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 cannot offer you a discount. The utilities’ rates are regulated and approved by the Public Service Commission. The scammer is trying to get personal information or your account number from you.

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.