

MPUA PUBLIC OUTREACH RESOURCES

JUNE 2015

SUMMER UTILITY SCAMS (*Factsheet or News Release*)

[Adapt into FACTSHEET or NEWS RELEASE]

SUMMER SCAMMERS TARGET UTILITY CUSTOMERS

Scams targeting utility customers are on the rise this summer, according to reports across the nation. Municipal utility customers in Missouri are included among those getting recent fraudulent calls from scammers threatening power shutoffs, demanding immediate payments, or requesting personal information.

[UTILITY NAME] cautions customers that they should never give personal or financial information to an unsolicited caller. **[UTILITY NAME]** will never demand immediate payment over the phone. **[ADD any other BRIEF description on how your utility makes customer contacts].**

Signs that you are dealing with a scammer

Utility companies, consumer protection agencies, and the Federal Trade Commission regularly receive complaints from consumers about utility bill scams. Here are some signs to beware of when dealing with an unknown caller:

- You get a call or an email claiming your services will be cut off unless you call a number or click on a link and give your account information. **[UTILITY NAME]** will never ask you to send your account information by email.
- Someone calls demanding you wire the money or use a prepaid or reloadable debit or gift card to pay your bill. Legitimate companies don't demand you use those methods to pay.
- The caller tells you to call a phone number and give your credit, debit or prepaid card number. If you do that, the scammer can access the money from your credit, debit or prepaid card, and you can't trace where your money went. Once it's gone, it's gone.

If you get a call, email, or personal visit from someone about your utility service:

- Never give out your Social Security Number, credit card number or banking information to anyone requesting it over the phone or at your home unless you initiated the contact
- Never wire money to someone you don't know — regardless of the situation. Once you wire money, you can't get it back.
- Do not click links or call numbers that appear in unexpected emails or texts — especially those asking for your account information. If you click on a link, your computer could become infected with malware, including viruses that can steal information and damage your computer.
- Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, gas pipes or appliances unless you scheduled an appointment or reported a utility problem. **Always ask utility**

MPUA PUBLIC OUTREACH RESOURCES

JUNE 2015

SUMMER UTILITY SCAMS (*Factsheet or News Release*)

employees for proper identification. *[add anything brief specific about your utility's employee identification policy]*

- Make sure you're dealing with **[UTILITY NAME]** before you pay any amount. Confirm where and how to pay your bill.
 - **[UTILITY OPTION: "To determine the status of your account [give details, website for lookup, phone number to call, business hours].**
 - **[UTILITY OPTION: If you fall behind on your utility bill, contact [UTILITY NAME] to see if you can work out a payment plan and a way to keep your service on.**
 - **[UTILITY OPTION: may wish to add brief payment/policy info here, or link to online info on policy]**

If you think a fake utility bill collector or any other scammer has contacted you, report the contact:

- Notify **[YOUR UTILITY NAME]**.
- Call the police **[or specify city/county police here, and correct contact number]**
- File a complaint with the Missouri Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division (online at <https://www.consumer.ago.mo.gov/> or by phone at 1-800-392-8222.) Be ready to include in your complaint any notices received or caller ID numbers for the incoming call.