

SPOTLIGHT: UTILITY SCAMS



Utility imposter scams can happen in-person or over the phone and come in a lot of shapes and sizes. Contact from your gas, electric, or water company threatening to immediately turn off your service is probably a scam.

How it might happen...



Scammers will try and get in contact with you by:



Phone call



Email



Physical mail



In-person

Spooing

Consumers should be wary of their caller ID as scammers will “spoo” the number they are calling from, which causes the customer’s phone to display a false caller ID. Often, the scammer will “spoo” a local number, perhaps even using the utility’s standard customer service number.

Late payments, new meters, etc.

The scammer may call and claim the consumer needs a new meter or they are late on their payments. Consumers have also reported seeing scammers dressed like a representative of a utility company, going door-to-door and demanding payment in prepaid cards or else power would be shut off.

Whatever form the utility scam takes, the red flags are the same...

RED FLAGS OF A UTILITY IMPOSTER SCAM



Asking for unusual forms of payment.

No real utility company will ever ask a consumer to pay with anything other than direct forms of payment like a bank account or credit card. If someone claiming to be a utility says you must pay in an uncommon form of payment, it’s a scam. Every time. No matter what they say.



Use scare tactics or threaten you into paying ASAP.

Often a scammer will warn the consumer they are late with payment and if they don’t pay immediately, their services will be shut off. Utilities are required to provide consumers with at least 10 days written notice before their service is shut off and a second notice a few days prior.



Cold-call and ask for you to verify personal information.

A cold-call is when you receive an unsolicited visit or telephone call made by someone trying to obtain payment or information for a service. If you receive a cold-call from anyone asking to verify private information like your account numbers/balances, Social Security number, date of birth, etc, hang up and directly call your utility company.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT, HANG UP!

If you have any doubt about the legitimacy of a caller, hang up immediately and call your utility's customer service center.

Dominion Energy South Carolina: (800) 251-7234

Duke Energy Carolinas: (800) 777-9898

Duke Energy Progress: (800) 452-2777

Santee Cooper: (800) 804-7424

Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina: Visit <https://www.ecsc.org/ecsc-members-map> to find the direct number of your co-op.

If you suspect or experience a scam, notify your local law enforcement agency.

REPORT!

Did you give personal or financial information to a scammer?:

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs

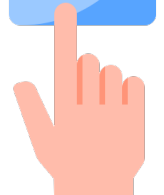
Identity Theft Unit

293 Greystone Boulevard, Ste. 400

PO Box 5757, Columbia, SC 29250

(844) TELL-DCA

<https://consumer.sc.gov/identity-theft-unit/scams>



If it sounds too good to be true...

RED FLAGS OF ANY SCAM:



Asks you to verify personal identifying information.



Sends you a check, asking you to cash it and wire or send money somewhere.



Scares you with threats of arrest or garnishment.



Asks you to wire transfer money or purchase a prepaid/reloadable debit card or gift cards and give them the number off the card.



Poses as a local, state, or federal law enforcement officer. They may also pose as other government officials.



Makes you think their "offer" is time sensitive. **"Act NOW, or you won't get this great deal!"**

For more information on filing a complaint or reporting a scam, visit consumer.sc.gov and "How Do I..."



South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs
293 Greystone Blvd., Ste. 400 • PO Box 5757 • Columbia, SC 29250
(800) 922-1594 • consumer.sc.gov

