

FPSC SCAM ALERT

Don't be a target! Fighting back against scammers who impersonate utilities, the Florida Public Service Commission warns consumers about recent scams and how to avoid them!

Here are examples of utility scams occurring in Florida and nationwide:

E-MAIL SCAM

Scammers target utility customers with e-mails that appear to be monthly bills from legitimate utilities. These e-mails are bogus and may contain a link directing a consumer to a site containing malware.

PHONE SCAM

Posing as official utility employees, scammers demand immediate "past due payments" with a prepaid credit card or MoneyPak card to prevent service disconnection. The scammers also use fake telephone numbers that could appear on a caller ID to be from your local utility. These calls are not from your utility company. Utilities never call and ask for credit card information and do not ask for your personal information unless you initiate the contact.

PHISHING SCAM

Nationwide, scammers advised utility customers that a third party--in most cases the Federal Government or President Obama--would pay their utility bills through a new federal program. Consumers are contacted via telephone, fliers, social media and text messages, and various other means with claims that the President is providing credits or applying payment to utility bills. To receive the money, scammers claim to need the consumer's Social Security Number (SSN) and financial institution routing and account numbers. In return, consumers are given a fraudulent routing number to use to pay their utility bills through an automated telephone service. The payment service initially seems to accept the payment, but then declines it upon finding that the banking information is invalid. The consumer's bill has not been paid, and his/her SSN and personal financial information have been compromised.

ENERGY MARKETING SCAM

A recent scheme aggressively targets utility customers to offer energy audits. Scammers--posing as utility employees or approved utility contractors--allegedly try to conduct home energy audits to sell energy-related services or equipment. Utilities do not call or visit their customers to solicit home energy surveys or audits, unless a customer requests an audit and prearranges a time. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services filed legal action to stop this scheme in Florida.

SEE BACK - PROTECT YOURSELF

PROTECT YOURSELF

*Here are some general ways to
protect yourself against utility-related scams:*



Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, natural gas pipes, or appliances unless you have scheduled an appointment or reported a problem. Also, ask the employee/contractor for proper identification.



If a caller claims to be from your utility company and you are pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up and call the customer service number on your utility bill for information.



Do not allow representatives into your home if you feel suspicious, unsure, or confused as to why they are there.



Never provide your Social Security Number, credit card number, or banking information to anyone who calls you, regardless of whom they claim to be representing.



Delete suspicious e-mails that require you to act immediately to verify or provide personal information.



Delete any e-mails from utilities/companies with whom you're not a customer.



Do not respond to suspicious e-mails. Responding often results in even more spam and scam attempts directed at you.



Think safety first, always! Do not give in to high pressure tactics for information over the phone or in person.

Look for more information on the Florida Public Service Commission's website at

WWW.FLORIDAPSC.COM

or call the Commission's toll-free number

1-800-342-3552