

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 12, 2018

Headline: **Scammers targeting City of Concord utility customers**

CONCORD – The City of Concord is once again alerting its residents, businesses, and other customers to be vigilant against scams targeting utility customers. While utility scams are not new or unique to Concord, the tactics these criminals use frequently change and become increasingly sophisticated over time.

**Common scam tactics**

- **Power disconnection threats:** Customers may receive threats to turn off electric service – usually in less than an hour – if a large payment is not made.
- **Immediate payment requests:** Customers are asked to quickly purchase a prepaid debit card and provide the card information, which grants the scammer instant access to personal funds. Some scammers may also request a money wire.
- **Calls that appear to be from your utility:** Scammers may rig caller ID to make it look like the call is from a service provider.

The latest variation is that scammers are posing as City of Concord and Duke Energy employees, claiming that you are behind on your bills. They'll tell you that you have until the end of the day to make a payment, or risk having your power shut off. In order to pay, you'll need to dial an 800-number. When you call, an automated message will play, saying that you have reached your utility provider. It's then followed by a customer service menu, similar to what you'd hear if you called the actual number. When you follow the prompts, you'll be directed to a scammer who will try to convince you they legitimately have your account information and solicit payment.

**The City of Concord is telling its customers that this is a scam. Never give out your credit card information over the phone, unless you are confident that you have called your utility company on your own accord using the number printed on your bill. For City of Concord utility customers, this number is 704-920-5555.**

If you've fallen victim to this scam or have received a similar call, please contact your utility company (for City of Concord, 704-920-5555) and local law enforcement (for Concord Police, 704-920-5000).

**Other tips to avoid falling for scams:**

- If you are contacted via email or social media by someone requesting your social security number, username or password, do not provide it. Do not click on any links accompanying the communication or respond in any manner.
- If City of Concord customers feel uncomfortable and know they have an outstanding balance that needs to be resolved, they should hang up and call Customer Care directly at 704-920-5555 or visit a representative in person at 35 Cabarrus Avenue W.
- Customers who have doubts about the legitimacy of any call from the City of Concord, especially one in which payment is requested, should call 704-920-5555.
- If you receive a call claiming to be your utility company and feel pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up the phone and call the customer service number on your utility bill.
- Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, natural gas pipes or appliances unless you have scheduled an appointment or have reported a utility problem. Also, ask utility employees for proper identification.
- Always think safety first. Do not give in to high pressure tactics over the phone for information or in person to get into your home.

For more information about common scams and how to avoid them, visit [utilitiesunited.org](http://utilitiesunited.org) or [duke-energy.com/customer-service/report-fraud-and-scams](http://duke-energy.com/customer-service/report-fraud-and-scams).

