



For Immediate Release
May 12, 2016

Bob Gough
217-782-5793
bgough@icc.illinois.gov

ICC, CUB and Chicago-area Utilities Issue Warning of Utility Scam Season

CHICAGO– Today, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB), are warning Chicago-area customers about scam artists posing as utility representatives.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) states that the number of reported scams generally rises with warmer weather. Nationally, there has been an uptick in people claiming to be utility company workers over the past several years. In fact, they are scam artists who pose as utility workers and who usually target customers through door-to-door visits and phone calls.

With the door-to-door scams, someone impersonating a utility worker will visit customers' homes looking to get personal and/or account information, and in some cases enter into the customer's home. Variations of the phone scam include stories that the customer's billing cycle has changed and payment is needed immediately; the account is past due and immediate payment is required to avoid disconnection of service; or that the customer's previous payments were not accepted or processed. In those cases, the scammers instruct customers to buy a prepaid credit card and direct them to call back with the personal identification number (PIN).

"The Illinois Commerce Commission does not tolerate utility scams and it commends the efforts of ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and CUB for their collaboration on spreading consumer awareness," said Chairman Brien Sheahan. "The ICC also reminds customers that in most cases, utilities are required to provide advance notice prior to disconnection of service and when in doubt customers should call the utility or visit their website to verify their account status and the utility's authorized payment methods."

"ComEd is committed to the safety of our customers, including keeping them informed of activity that could impact their service or accounts. Over the last several months we have seen an increase in phone impersonations where scam artists call customers claiming they are a utility representative and proceed to swindle unsuspecting victims out of money or financial information," said Fidel Marquez, senior vice president of Governmental and External Affairs, ComEd. "We are pleased to join with other Illinois utilities and the ICC and CUB to amplify the information around this fraudulent activity and raise greater awareness among our customers."

"As the largest natural gas distributor in Illinois, the safety of our people, our pipelines and the public is at the heart of everything we do," said Jim Griffin, vice president of Operations, Nicor Gas. "Coming together to raise

awareness and informing customers of these dangerous scammers is critical in putting a stop to these predatory and fraudulent tactics.”

“The safety of our customers is the top priority in everything we do; whether it’s conducting home inspections, responding to gas leaks or installing new piping,” said Eva-Dina Delgado, manager of Government Relations for Peoples Gas/North Shore Gas. “And, protecting our customers from being victims of scams or imposters is equally as important, which is why we regularly educate them on how to avoid becoming a victim.”

“Utility imposter scams are despicable for two reasons: They take advantage of our fear of losing a service we can’t do without, and they slander the reputation of the honest, hard-working, front-line utility employees who keep our service running on a daily basis,” CUB Communications Director Jim Chilsen said. “As with any scam, good education and a strong community response are the best weapons against these con artists. Get the facts, protect yourself, and spread the word in your neighborhood: Utility workers don’t go door-to-door or call you seeking private financial information.”

Customers can avoid being scammed by taking a few precautions:

- Never provide social security or personal information to anyone initiating contact with you claiming to be a utility representative or requesting you to send money to another person or entity other than your local utility providers.
- Always ask to see a company photo ID before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.
- When in doubt, check it out. Be skeptical of individuals wearing clothing with old or defaced company logos. If you have any doubts, ask to see a company photo ID.
- Never make payment for services to anyone coming to the door.
- If customers have concerns about the status of their account, they can also contact their local utility providers:

o ComEd 1-800-EDISON1

o Nicor Gas 1-888-NICOR4U

o Peoples Gas 866-556-6001

o North Shore Gas 866-556-6004

If you suspect you have been scammed, have a suspicious incident to report or have questions, contact the ICC’s Consumer Services Division at 1-800-524-0795 or the Illinois Attorney General’s office toll free at 1-800-386-5438 (TTY 1-800-964-3013).

###

Follow the Illinois Commerce Commission on twitter @ILCommerceComm.

About the Illinois Commerce Commission

The Illinois Commerce Commission’s mission is to pursue an appropriate balance between the interests of consumers and existing and emerging service providers to ensure the provision of adequate, efficient, reliable, safe and least-cost public utility services. The Commission pursues this mission through three bureaus: The Bureau of External Affairs, which provides educational information on utility issues for consumers, governmental entities and communities and through its Consumer Services Division, resolves customer/utility disputes and develops rules on utility service and consumer protection; the Public Utilities Bureau, which focuses on financial and operational analysis, policy development, public safety and enforcement activities related to electric, natural gas, water, sewer and telecommunications companies; and the Transportation Bureau, which includes trucking insurance and registration, railroad safety, relocation towing, safety towing and household goods

moving company enforcement activities. The ICC's five commissioners are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Illinois State Senate for five-year terms.