



For Immediate Release
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ICC Reminds Utility Customers to Beware of Scam Artists Posing as Utility Company Reps, Demanding Payment

CHICAGO, IL--The Illinois Commerce Commission reminds utility customers in Illinois to beware of a scam in which someone claiming to be a utility employee asks for immediate payment of a bill either at a customer's door, over the telephone or by email.

The ICC has received complaints from utility customers about scam artists claiming to be utility representatives, telling customers that their service will be disconnected unless payment is immediately made directly to the scammers. The scam artist may direct the consumer to purchase a prepaid credit card, a "Cash Card," and to call them back with the personal identification number (PIN). The stories can vary, for example, with the scammer saying that the customer's billing cycle has changed and payment must be made immediately, that the account is past due and payment can be made to them directly to avoid disconnection of the utility service, or the customer's previous payment was rejected or never received.

The scam has affected customers throughout the state, but a spike was recently noted for Ameren Illinois customers.

"This month we are seeing an uptick in the number of reported scams, particularly those targeting businesses," said Tim Reagan, director of corporate security at Ameren. "To safeguard all of our customers, it's important that anyone who has been subject to these scams call Ameren and their local police department."

Scam artists have also used a tactic called "spoofing" to manipulate the Caller ID displayed phone number so that it appears as a the utility's number.

ICC Chairman Brien Sheahan noted the significant increase in customer complaints about the illegal scams and urged consumers to protect themselves by contacting their utility or the ICC.

"Any consumer or business who feels they are being pressured or scammed should immediately end the conversation and call their utility service provider or the ICC Consumer Services Division," Sheahan said. "Do not sign anything or give personal information to anyone calling you on the phone, sending you an e-mail or showing up at your door. If you feel something's not quite right about the situation, reach out for help."

The ICC offers these reminders to utility customers:

- Never provide personal information to anyone who comes to the door or calls you claiming to be a representative of the utility.
- Contact the utility at the phone number listed on your bill to confirm the caller or the representative at your home is a verifiable employee of the utility. Do not call a different number suggested by the potential scammer and do not let them into your home.
- Utility field personnel in Illinois do not take payments from consumers. Be on guard for anyone who asks for your personal information, or says you must pay immediately and suggests a method to get the money quickly.

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. You may also contact Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-386-5438 or file a complaint on her [website](#).

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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.