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ICC Warns Residents of Potential COVID-19 Scams

Chicago, IL...The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is warning residents to be on alert for potential scammers using the COVID-19 pandemic to exploit and defraud victims.

“Unfortunately, there are individuals who are using this public health emergency to take advantage of and deceptively obtain money or personal information from unsuspecting residents. It’s important everyone protects themselves and their loved ones by being on the lookout for these deceptive, illegal practices,” said ICC Chairman Carrie Zalewski.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICC recently issued an Order to stop door-to-door marketing by alternative retail electric and gas suppliers (ARES/AGS). The Commission also issued a moratorium on electric, gas, water and wastewater service disconnections and the suspension of late fees by large public utilities.

The ICC has received reports from utilities of suspicious cases of individuals knocking on customers’ doors claiming to be a utility representative demanding payment for utility bills and threatening disconnection.

“A legitimate utility worker will never come to your home to demand money or prepaid credit cards, or ask for your personal information. Do not share your utility account or social security numbers with a stranger at the door or on the phone. Do not hesitate to immediately shut the door, and call the utility or your local police to report the incident,” said ICC Commissioner Sadzi Martha Oliva.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is also warning consumers about other scams that involve hoax text messages or robo-calls that prey upon consumers’ fears by advertising fake cures, home testing kits, phony insurance plans or HVAC duct cleaning services claiming to kill the COVID-19 virus. Other potential scams include text messages from entities posing as the federal government, offering \$30,000 in COVID-19 relief money, or posing as the World Health Organization (WHO) claiming to raise funds for charity. Clicking on links or attachments to these kinds of text message can lead to the spread of malicious spyware or computer virus on your electronic devices, compromising your personal information.

Scammers are also aware that many individuals have or will be receiving federal COVID-19 economic stimulus checks and might attempt to contact you electronically asking to ‘verify’ your personal information to release the funds to your bank.

“It is important to remember that no one from the government or a public utility will ever contact you asking for personal information. If you happen to receive a suspicious call, text or email: do not respond, or click on any links or attachments,” said ICC Commissioner Maria Bocanegra. “Your best protection against scammers is to stay informed and be able to recognize the potential traps they set.”

If you believe that you have been scammed, contact your local law enforcement agency immediately. If you’ve been illegally solicited in person by an ARES/AGS, you can file a complaint by calling the ICC’s Consumer Services Division at 1-800-524-0795 or online at <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/complaints/>. Additional tips to protect yourself can be found on the FCC’s website at: <https://www.fcc.gov/covid-scams> .

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About the Illinois Commerce Commission

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is a quasi-judicial body made up of five Commissioners. Through its Public Utility Program, the Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Through its Transportation Regulatory Program, the Commission oversees public safety and consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses and repossession agencies. The Commission’s Rail Safety Program also inspects and regulates the general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the state.

To learn more about the Commission, its offices and bureaus, click [here](#). If you are a consumer who needs help resolving a utility dispute call 800-524-0795 or file an online complaint [here](#). For a complaint related to transportation, call 217-782-6448.

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