

News from the Illinois Commerce Commission / Illinois Attorney General

Voice: Springfield. 217.782.5793

FAX 217.524.0674

BBS 217.782.9233

<http://www.icc.illinois.gov>



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Media Contacts:

Beth Bosch

Illinois Commerce Commission
(217)782-5793

Maura Possley

Illinois Attorney General's Office
(312)814-3118

mpossley@atg.state.il.us

Attorney General Madigan, ICC Warn Utility Customers of Scam Artists Posing as Utility Company Reps, Demanding Payment

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Commerce Commission issued an alert to utility customers about a scam targeting residents in the Chicago area and Northern Illinois 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 and the Attorney General's Office have received complaints from utility customers about scam artists claiming to be utility representatives, telling customers that their service will be disconnected unless payment is 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.

Complaints have doubled in the past year, with victims paying up to \$8,000 to the con artists. Complaints indicate the scammers may be targeting small businesses and Latino residents in particular.

"Any time you are asked upfront for money in an unsolicited call or knock at your door, that is a universal red flag for a scam," Madigan said. "Utility companies do not go door-to-door collecting payments. Instead utility customers should report any solicitation immediately to the Attorney General's Office, the ICC or their utility company directly."

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

"We want all consumers and businesses who feel they are being pressured or scammed to end the conversation with potential scammers and call their utility service provider or the ICC Consumer

Services Division to check out the claims,” Scott said. “You do not have to 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, get the utility’s phone number off your bill, call the utility and ask for help.”

Attorney General Madigan and the ICC offer 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 with 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 Madigan’s Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-386-5438 or file a complaint on her [website](#). Consumers can also file complaints with the ICC at 1-800-524-0795.