



NEWS RELEASE

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Xcel Energy and utilities nationwide promote scam awareness campaign to protect customers

Eau Claire, Wis.- (Nov.15, 2017) – Xcel Energy is joining more than 100 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities to raise awareness about scams targeting customers. Today, is the second annual Utility Scam Awareness Day, which focuses on exposing the tactics scammers use to steal money from utility customers and educating customers about how to protect themselves.

Typically, customers receive a telephone call from an individual claiming to be a utility company representative. In some cases, scammers extort payments from customers by threatening to disconnect or shutoff service immediately. To complicate matters, scammers are increasingly adept at disguising themselves as utility company representatives. For example, some scammers use technology to “spoof” a phone number so when a customer views caller ID, it appears the call is actually coming from a utility company when it is not.

Xcel Energy is a member of Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS), a consortium of utility companies and their respective trade organizations that develop consumer education campaigns and initiatives to prevent scams. This week, UUAS released a report titled, “[Consumer’s Guide to Impostor Utility Scams](#),” which exposes some of the most frequent ways in which impostors pose as utility companies to steal money from customers.

Signs of Potential Scam Activity:

- Threat to disconnect: Scammers may aggressively tell the customer his or her utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made – usually within an hour.
- Request for immediate payment: Scammers may instruct a customer to purchase a prepaid card – widely available at retail stores – then instruct the customer to use the card to pay their utility bill.
- Request for prepaid card: When the customer calls back, the caller asks the customer for the prepaid card’s number, which grants the scammer instant access to the card’s funds and the victim’s money is gone.

How Customers Can Protect Themselves:

- Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. Xcel Energy and other legitimate utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment and always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill.
- If someone threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door. Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification, by mail and included with their regular monthly bill. Xcel Energy never sends a single notification one hour or less before disconnection.
- If customers suspect someone is trying to scam them, they should call Xcel Energy at the number on their monthly bill. The Xcel Energy Customer Service number is 1-800-895-4999. They should not call the phone number the scammer provides.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud, or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scammers, should contact local law enforcement authorities or call 911. [The Federal Trade Commission's website](#) is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

Visit the [Xcel Energy website](#) or [Utilities United](#) for more information about how customers can protect themselves from scams or follow along on social media: Twitter @U_U_A_S and Facebook @UtilitiesUnited

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About Utilities United Against Scams

Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) is a consortium of more than 100 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities and their respective trade associations. UUAS is dedicated to combating impostor utility scams by providing a forum for utilities and trade associations to share data and best practices, in addition to working together to implement initiatives to inform and protect customers.

About Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy (NYSE: XEL) provides the energy that powers millions of homes and businesses across eight Western and Midwestern states. With its Wisconsin headquarters in Eau Claire, the company is an industry leader in responsibly reducing carbon emissions and producing and delivering clean energy solutions from a variety of renewable sources at competitive prices. For more information, visit xcelenergy.com or follow us on Twitter and Facebook.