



NEWS RELEASE

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DORA's PUC/OCC Advise Utility Customers to Avoid Scams

DENVER (Apr. 2, 2020) -- The Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the Colorado Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), two divisions within the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA), are helping to raise awareness about scams being perpetrated on utility consumers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Unfortunately, scammers haven't taken a break during this public health crisis, and utility customers may be especially vulnerable. It is important for consumers to know that, in response to Gov. Jared Polis' March 20, 2020 Executive Order D 2020 012, all Colorado electric and gas utilities have ceased disconnections during this time. If a utility customer receives any call threatening an immediate shutoff, it is a scam.

Colorado consumers can obtain information about their specific utility provider's policies in response to COVID-19 at this link: [Statewide Utility Measures Undertaken in Response to Executive Order](#).

Signs of a Scam:

- **Disconnection Deception:** Scammers call threatening disconnection of your utility service, demanding immediate payment by prepaid cards purchased at a local retail store (or credit card, debit card, bank draft, wiring money, etc.) and insisting you call them back. This may also be done in person or via email.
- **Contractor Con:** Scammers posing as utility workers or contractors affiliated with your utility may knock on your door claiming to be employed or hired by the utility company to read, upgrade, reset, repair, replace, or inspect your utility meter or other utility-related device.
- **Bogus Bills:** Scammers send suspicious emails that appear to be a bill sent by your utility company, potentially featuring your utility's logo and color scheme.

How Customers Can Protect Themselves:

- Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shut off. Legitimate utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment and always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail, or in person. Utilities do not demand immediate payment over the phone. Further, companies never send a single notification one hour or less before disconnection.
- At this time, utilities are not sending employees into homes to read in-home meters in an effort to promote social distancing to prevent further spread of the virus. Anyone claiming otherwise is not legitimate.
- Do not click on any links or attachments in any email unless you have verified the sender. You may be directed to a scam website designed to steal your personal information or you might install malicious software onto your computer without ever knowing it. Utility companies typically send bills via mail, unless you have opted to receive your bill electronically.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud, or who feel threatened during contact, should alert local law enforcement authorities immediately. The Federal Trade Commission is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information. The Colorado Attorney General's Office Consumer Protection Section also provides consumer protection information for victims of fraud.

The Utilities United Against Scams ("UUAS") released an alert focused on scams in the time of the COVID-19 crisis. <https://www.utilitiesunited.org/-/media/Files/UNITED/Documents/UUAS-overview-Covid-19v2.ashx>