



STATE OF CONNECTICUT



**GEORGE JEPSEN
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**ELIN SWANSON KATZ
CONSUMER COUNSEL**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elin Swanson Katz: 860-827-2910
Jaclyn M. Falkowski: 860-808-5324

CONSUMER ADVISORY: CONSUMER COUNSEL AND ATTORNEY GENERAL WARN ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS ABOUT PROVIDING ACCOUNT DATA OVER THE PHONE

(March 7, 2014 – New Britain) Elin Swanson Katz, Connecticut Consumer Counsel, together with George Jepsen, Connecticut Attorney General, are urging consumers to use caution when they receive a sales call from an electric supplier asking for account data over the phone. They are specifically warning consumers not to give their Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) or United Illuminating (UI) account numbers, or any other confidential information, to electric suppliers over the telephone or to a door-to-door salesperson unless they have made the decision to switch suppliers. Both agencies have received reports of consumers being switched to an electric supplier without their permission or knowledge.

“We’ve received a spate of complaints from customers that they are being asked for their Connecticut Light & Power or United Illuminating account numbers during a sales call, and then they are being switched to an electric supplier without their permission,” Consumer Counsel Katz reported. “The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority is investigating these complaints, but in the meantime, I urge consumers not to give out account numbers, unless they’ve definitely decided to switch suppliers.”

“Consumers should always be wary about providing personal or financial information, including account numbers, over the phone,” said Attorney General Jepsen. “While we regularly receive

complaints about spoofing – where the caller has deliberately falsified their telephone number or caller ID information – these new complaints are particularly concerning given the widespread issues we’re investigating about high electric rates from some alternative suppliers. We know that a large number of customers are currently seeking new suppliers to avoid exorbitantly high rates, and we urge consumers to be extra vigilant about disclosing their account information unless they’re absolutely sure they understand and want to accept the plan they’re discussing.”

Customers are also encouraged to check the information available on www.energizect.com or to speak with an energy professional at 1-877-WISE-USE prior to switching to a supplier, rather than making a snap decision in response to a sales call. This service allows both residents and businesses to compare supplier options and rates, review the standard offer available from their electric company, and to see what is available to them before making any decisions.

The Consumer Counsel also advises consumers to be very cautious about signing up for “variable electric rates,” that is, rates that fluctuate month-to-month. “We’ve received many complaints about these types of rates,” Katz said. “We’ve heard from many customers with bills that have doubled or even tripled in one month. Variable rates can change without warning. Overall, consumers need to know exactly what they’re signing up for, and closely monitor their bills.”

In addition, the Consumer Counsel and the AG want to make consumers aware that they do not have to choose an electric supplier; rather, consumers may elect to stay on the Standard Service rates of CL&P and UI, which are 9.235 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) and 9.0041 cents per kWh, respectively. Both CL&P and UI’s Standard Service rates are fixed for six month intervals. Current Standard Service rates are fixed until June 30, 2014. During June 2014, consumers can monitor www.ct.gov/occ or www.energizect.com for the latest Standard Services rates.

The Consumer Counsel and the Attorney General are active participants in Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURPA) Docket Number 13-07-18, a proceeding that will establish rules and guidelines for electric suppliers. To follow or participate in this docket, consumers can visit www.ct.gov/pura/.

###

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut's advocate for all utility ratepayers. OCC seeks to ensure just and reasonable rates and reliable utility service for customers of Connecticut's electric, gas, telephone, and water utilities and reasonable protection for cable television customers. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/occ.