



## STATE OF CONNECTICUT

# NEWS RELEASE

Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz

---

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Elin Swanson Katz

Elin.Katz@ct.gov

(860) 827-2910

### **CONSUMER COUNSEL ELIN SWANSON KATZ RECOGNIZES NATIONAL UTILITY SCAM AWARENESS DAY**

**NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (November 15, 2017)** Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz announced that today is National Utility Scam Awareness Day. The day falls in the middle of a week-long effort to shed light on common impostor utility-related scams and tactics used against unsuspecting consumers.

Utility companies and advocates across the country are joining forces through Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS), a consortium of over 100 electric, natural gas, and water companies in the U.S. and Canada, to educate and empower consumers on how best to protect themselves from illusive practices that take advantage of ratepayers. Scammers are becoming experts at deceiving trusting customers and ultimately stealing their money.

UUAS has published a fact sheet and a consumer guide designed to educate consumers on avoiding scams. A copy of the fact sheet is attached and also available on their website: [www.utilitiesunited.org](http://www.utilitiesunited.org). Its publication, Consumer's Guide to Impostor Utility Scams, is also available on the site.

Some of the most common scams include a threat to disconnect service unless an immediate payment is made, unsolicited telephone calls, a push for personal or financial information, and utility company misrepresentation. Scams are changing regularly and scammers are sophisticated in their approach, even donning a fake utility company uniform or identification badge in many cases.

“I strongly urge utility customers to protect personal information, including their account numbers. Utility company representatives generally do not solicit door-to-door or via telemarketing calls. Don't be afraid to ask questions to door-to-door and telemarketing

solicitors, and ask door-to-door solicitors for identification. If you think you've been the victim of a scam or been exposed to a marketing scam or deceptive practice, report it to your utility company and to Connecticut's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)," said Consumer Counsel Katz.

"Scammers are skilled at tricking consumers through their phone, in-person, and internet tactics targeted at their pocketbooks, property, and personal information," stated Sheri Givens, Executive Director of Utilities United Against Scams. "Together, through your utility companies' and state consumer advocates' efforts, we can educate communities nationwide on the types of scams targeting them in hopes of preventing them from becoming a victim."

Electric, natural gas, and water companies are faced with handling customer service complaints and questions around many of these scams and are urging their customers to educate themselves before agreeing to anything.

To report suspicious activity to PURA, consumers may file a letter in either [electronic](#) or paper form with PURA's Executive Secretary at Ten Franklin Square, New Britain, Connecticut; e-mail PURA at [PURA.ExecutiveSecretary@ct.gov](mailto:PURA.ExecutiveSecretary@ct.gov); or call 1-800-382-4586 (toll free within Connecticut), 1-860-827-2622 (outside Connecticut), or TDD 860-827-2837.

###

*The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut's advocate for consumers on issues relating to electricity, natural gas, water, and telecommunications. For more information, visit [www.ct.gov/occ](http://www.ct.gov/occ).*

# 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.

### Scams Impacting Customers Nationwide

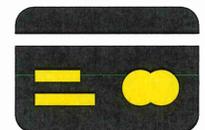
Many electric, water, and natural gas customers throughout the country are being targeted by impostor utility scams each day. Scammers typically use phone, in-person, and online tactics to target customers.

One of the most common types of utility scams involves customers receiving unsolicited telephone, electronic, or in-person communications from an individual claiming to be a utility company representative. The scammer warns that the customer's electric, water, or natural gas service will be disconnected or shut off if the customer fails to make an immediate payment—typically using a reloadable prepaid debit card or other non-traceable form of payment.

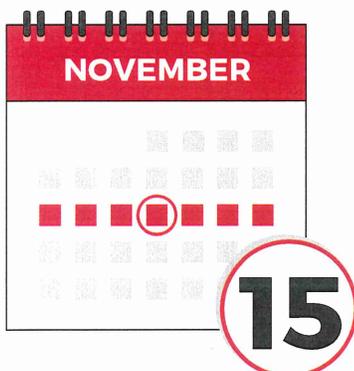
Scammers often use valid-looking phone numbers, graphics, uniforms, and other forms of fraudulent identification.

#### Below are a few common signs of potential scam activity:

- **Threat to disconnect:** The impostor utility representative aggressively tells the customer his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment is not made.
- **Request for immediate payment:** The caller instructs the customer to quickly purchase a prepaid debit card—widely available at retail stores.
- **Request for prepaid debit card info:** The caller asks the customer for the prepaid debit card's number, which grants the caller instant access to the card's funds.



Visit [www.utilitiesunited.org](http://www.utilitiesunited.org) for more information and tips about how customers can protect themselves from scams or follow along on social media: **Twitter** @U\_U\_A\_S and **Facebook** @UtilitiesUnited



### Mark Your Calendar: **Utility Scam Awareness Day**

The second annual Utility Scam Awareness Day will be held on **Wednesday, November 15, 2017**, and it will be supported by a **week-long advocacy and awareness campaign—Utility Scam Awareness Week**—focused on exposing the tactics scammers use to steal money from utility customers and on educating customers on how to protect themselves.