



# FIGHT UTILITY SCAMS! THE POWER IS YOURS

Nationwide, there has been a noticeable increase in the reported number of utility scams - an incident where a scammer impersonates a utility, either by phone, in-person or through the Internet, to deceive a consumer into giving away money.

## COMMON UTILITY SCAMS:

**DISCONNECTION THREAT** - Scammers call and threaten to disconnect your utility service unless a payment is made immediately by cash, credit card, prepaid credit card or by wiring money. Scammers may also show up at your home or business during a busy time threatening disconnection unless an immediate payment is made.

**“GREEN DOT” SCAM** - Scammers, who target both residential and business customers, call claiming your payment is overdue. They threaten to turn off your service unless you send money immediately. As part of the scam, you are asked to purchase a pre-paid debit card, such as a Green Dot or MoneyPak, for a specific amount. The scammer then gives you a phone number to call to make a payment.

**OVERPAYMENT TRICK** - Scammers call to say you overpaid a bill and they need your financial information like a bank account or credit card number in order to issue a refund. This information is also used to steal your identity.

**FAKE BILLS** - Scammers send fake bills through email that appear to be from your utility company.

**LEAK DECEPTION** - Scammers posing as utility workers try to enter your home by telling you there is a major gas or water leak in the area. They may be dressed as utility workers and even present fake IDs to prove they work for one of the utilities.

**EQUIPMENT OR REPAIR FEES** - Scammers will call you requesting a separate payment to replace or install a utility-related device, such as a meter.

**ONE RING SCAM** - Scammers call targets, usually late at night then abruptly hang up. Those who call back are connected to a number that charges for the call by the minute. It's also known as a “Wangiri” scam, Japanese for one-ring-and-cut.

**BILL PAYMENT OR ASSISTANCE SCAMS** - Scammers may promise to assist you with your utility bills, offering a reduced rate via federal or state programs. The scammer will attempt to get personal information from you in order to sign you up for programs. Scammers also offer phony account or routing numbers for you to make payments on your bills.



## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM UTILITY SCAMS

**FIRST:** Always ask yourself “Is this how I usually interact with my utility?” If the answer is no, you should immediately hang up the phone, close and lock the door, delete the email, and if necessary, call the police.

**SECOND:** Call the utility with the phone numbers listed on your regular bill to verify the information.

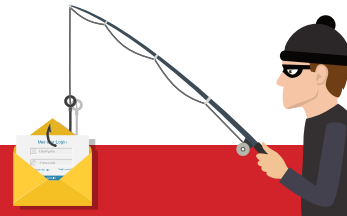


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**FINALLY:** Contact The Public Service Commission, The Office of The People’s Counsel, or the Office of the Attorney General - who have dedicated consumer assistance teams who can advise you on how to proceed if you’ve been the target of a scam.

Remember, a scammer can’t take your money or your personal information unless you give it to them. The power is yours.

# HERE ARE SOME TESTED **DOs** AND **DON'Ts** FOR YOU TO FOLLOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM UTILITY SCAMS



## ✓ DOs

- ✓ **HANG UP IMMEDIATELY ON SUSPICIOUS CALLERS** - If you feel uncertain or uncomfortable about a call, hang up the phone and call the utility company or one of the agencies listed below.
- ✓ **ASK QUESTIONS** - Ask enough questions of anyone calling so you can verify you're speaking with the utility directly.
- ✓ **ALWAYS ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION** - Request identification from anyone stating they're a utility employee. Utilities do not show up at a residence or business without an appointment. If this happens, contact the utility directly to verify the presence of the employee for the purpose stated.
- ✓ **STAY INFORMED** - Scammers are inventing new schemes all the time. Search online or contact the agencies below to learn about scams that are occurring in your area.
- ✓ **PAY YOUR UTILITY BILLS IN THE MANNER YOU NORMALLY PAY THEM** - A utility will contact you in a routine manner. Don't let scammers convince you to pay with a different method.

## ✗ DON'Ts

- ✗ **DON'T PROVIDE PERSONAL OR FINANCIAL INFORMATION** - Aggressively guard your personal information, such as social security number, credit card numbers, and utility account numbers. Never provide personal information that will give a scammer access to your funds or to gather more information about you.
- ✗ **DON'T WIRE MONEY OR MAKE PAYMENTS OVER THE TELEPHONE** - Scammers may ask you to wire money, purchase a prepaid card, or ask for a credit card number. Never make a payment over the telephone, unless it is with the utility directly.
- ✗ **DON'T BE PRESSURED** - Scammers use high pressure tactics to force you into making quick, rash decisions. Stay calm and refuse to be rushed into action. If you are concerned about an alleged disconnection, call the utility to confirm the status of your account. A utility will never show up at your door without prior notification.
- ✗ **DON'T CLICK ON LINKS IN EMAILS** - If you receive an unusual email from your utility, delete immediately. Don't click on links, open attachments or respond.

## 📞 KEY CONTACTS

### UTILITIES

Contact the utilities below to confirm the status of your account or to confirm whether one of their representatives should be at your property. You can also contact the utility company to report a scam attempt.

**Pepco** 202-833-7500

**Washington Gas** 1-844-927-4427,  
Option 6 - Speak to a Customer Advocate

**DC Water** 202-354-3600

**Verizon** 1-800-837-4966

### AGENCIES

The following agencies can assist you if you think you've been the target of a utility scam:

**DC Public Service Commission** 202-626-5120

**Office of the People's Counsel** 202-727-3071

**Office of the Attorney General** 202-442-9828

**AARP District of Columbia State Office**  
1-866-554-5384 (toll-free)

**Metropolitan Police Department**  
Financial and Cyber Crimes Unit 202-727-4159

You may need to contact the police if you have suffered loss of money or property due to a utility scam.