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Illinois Utilities Join National Effort to Help Protect Customers from Scammers

“Utilities United Against Scams Day” helps raise awareness and provides customers with essential information on how to protect themselves!

CHICAGO, IL (November 14, 2017) – Illinois utilities – ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, and North Shore Gas – for the second year in a row have joined forces with dozens of natural gas and electric utility companies across the United States and Canada to help provide essential information that can help utility customers avoid being scammed. These utilities, including other Exelon utilities, Atlantic City Electric, BGE, Delmarva Power, PECO and Pepco are committed to educating customers and putting a stop to scamming.

The collaborating energy companies have joined together again this year and designated Nov. 15 as “Utilities United Against Scams Day.” This day will be supported by a week-long campaign with content, online and on social media channels, focused on exposing the tricks scammers use to steal money from customers, and how customers can protect themselves. The effort, which includes utility member organizations such as Edison Electric Institute and American Gas Association, encourages utilities to share these messages to help guard against scam activity.

“It’s vital we continue to get the word out about utility scams to help protect our customers and keep them from becoming victims,” said **Fidel Marquez, senior vice president of Governmental and External Affairs, ComEd.** “We are proud to be a part of this important movement and are committed to continuing our efforts to create awareness and inform our customers on how to protect themselves against these fraudulent scammers.”

“Ensuring the safety of every family we serve is our highest priority,” said **Jim Griffin, vice president of operations at Nicor Gas.** “The first step toward change is awareness. By uniting with other utilities in Illinois and across the country, we are raising the awareness among our customers and hopefully protecting them from potential scams.”

“At Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas safety is our number-one priority, that’s why it is important for us to partner with utilities in Illinois to help raise awareness on this issue,” said **Michelle Rindt, vice president – customer service, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas.** “We are providing important information that will help our customers be knowledgeable about how to identify fraudulent behavior and protect themselves against dangerous scammers. Our goal is to reduce the number of scam victims in Illinois and across the country.”

When being scammed, a customer typically receives an unsolicited phone call from an individual who falsely claims to be a utility representative. The scammer warns that the customer's service will be shut off if the customer fails to make a payment – usually within a short timeframe through a prepaid debit card.

Scammers have even duplicated the upfront Interactive Voice Response system of some utilities, so when customers call the number provided by the scammer, it sounds like a legitimate business. Some of these scammers also use caller ID “spoofing” to replicate a utility's phone number.

Red flags for scam activity

- The scammer often becomes angry and tells a customer his or her account is past due and service will be shut off if a large payment isn't made – usually within less than an hour.
- The scammer instructs the customer to purchase a prepaid debit or credit card – widely available at most retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment.
- The scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card's receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the funds loaded to the card.

How to protect yourself

- Utility representatives will never ask or require a customer with a past due balance to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Customers can make payments online, by phone, automatic bank withdrawal, mail or in person.
- Customers with a past due balance will receive multiple shut off notifications – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.

Don't Get Scammed: Customers can avoid being scammed by taking a few precautions:

- **Never provide social security numbers or personal information** to anyone initiating contact with you claiming to be a utility representative or requesting you to send money to another person or entity other than your local utility providers.
- **Always ask to see a company photo ID** before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.
- **When in doubt, check it out.** Be skeptical of individuals wearing clothing with old or defaced company logos. If you have any doubts, ask to see a company photo ID.
- **Never make payment for services to anyone coming to the door.**

Anyone who believes he or she has been a target of a phone scam is urged to contact the Illinois Attorney General's office toll free at 1-800-386-5438 (TTY 1-800-964-3013) or visit the Illinois Attorney General's web site at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov and click on the link "Protecting Consumers."

If customers have concerns about the status of their account, they can also contact us:

- ComEd 1-800-EDISON1
- Nicor Gas 1-888-NICOR4U
- Peoples Gas 866-556-6001

- North Shore Gas 866-556-6004

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Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation (NYSE: EXC), the nation's leading competitive energy provider, with approximately 10 million customers. ComEd provides service to approximately 3.8 million customers across northern Illinois, or 70 percent of the state's population. For more information visit ComEd.com, and connect with the company on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Nicor Gas is one of seven natural gas distribution companies of Southern Company Gas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Southern Company (NYSE: SO). Nicor Gas serves more than 2.2 million customers in a service territory that encompasses most of the northern third of Illinois, excluding the city of Chicago. For more information, visit www.nicorgas.com.

Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas are both subsidiaries of WEC Energy Group (NYSE: WEC) and regulated natural gas delivery companies. Peoples Gas serves approximately 830,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in the city of Chicago. North Shore Gas serves approximately 159,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in 54 communities within the northern suburbs of Chicago. For more information about natural gas safety, energy efficiency and other energy-related topics, visit northshoregasdelivery.com, or www.peoplesgasdelivery.com.