



Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor

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## Consumer alert: Fraudulent calls demand immediate utility payments

Consumers need to be aware of an ongoing scam that is targeting utility customers in Indiana and throughout the United States.

Under the scam, a consumer may receive a phone call from someone claiming to work for his or her electric utility, with a fake number showing on the consumer's caller ID. The caller will claim the customer has a delinquent bill, threaten to disconnect service and demand immediate payment, often with a prepaid debit card.

Several Indiana utilities have warned their customers about the scam. However, all consumers need to be aware because the scam's full extent is still unknown.

"If someone calls you, claims to be from your utility, and demands immediate payment, hang up and do not give out any personal or financial information," said Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor David Stippler. "Then, call your utility at the customer service number that appears on your bill. The utility should be made aware of the contact and can verify your account status at any time."

Under Indiana law, an electric or natural gas utility under Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) jurisdiction – such as Citizens Gas, Duke Energy, Indiana Michigan Power, Indianapolis Power & Light, Northern Indiana Public Service Company, or Vectren Energy Delivery – must provide a customer with a **written notice at least 14 days** before it disconnects service for non-payment.

A water utility under IURC jurisdiction must provide written notice at least seven days in advance. Exceptions to the rule include life-threatening situations, equipment tampering, and fraudulent use of service.

Utilities outside IURC jurisdiction (including rural electric membership cooperatives and most municipal electric and water utilities) establish disconnection policies locally, and customers are encouraged to know their utilities' rules.

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The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.

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