



INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY CONSUMER COUNSELOR

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It's the busiest time of the year for most of us. While retailers enjoy the extra business and we enjoy the holidays with family and friends, it's also a time that can bring out the worst in scammers and con artists. In particular, all consumers should keep their guard up about scams involving their utility services.

Here's what typically happens: A consumer (often a small business) will receive a call from someone claiming to work for his or her utility. The consumer's caller ID may even be tricked into showing the utility's name and what appears to be a legitimate phone number. The caller will claim the customer's bill is past due and demand that the customer pay within an hour or service will be shut off immediately. Be aware: Indiana utilities are required to provide written notices before disconnecting customers for nonpayment.

If you receive such a phone call, it's best to hang up right away. If the caller demands that you use a pre-paid debit card or a money order to pay the alleged debt, that's a red flag. Simply don't do it!

Many utilities across the country are supporting Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) — a new, national coalition to protect customers from such fraud. UUAS is a welcome initiative.

If you are ever worried about your billing status, call your utility using the customer service number on your bill.

Happy Holidays to all. But please be on the alert!

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