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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CONSUMER ALERT: Tips to Avoid Utility Scam Phone Calls



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert regarding utility scam calls. Utility scams occur when an imposter claims to be a utility company representative and threatens to shut off power, gas or water unless payment is made immediately. The scammers tell consumers the only way to keep services from being turned off is to immediately pay the amount owed on an overdue bill—often through wire transfer or a money card.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “These deceitful utility scammers can sound persuasive on the phone and will use scare tactics to trick consumers into making false payments. Consumers should be suspicious of any unsolicited phone call demanding money and report any suspicious activity to our office.”

Utility scammers target individuals and businesses. While individuals seek to avoid the discomfort and inconvenience of disrupted utility services, businesses often cannot afford utilities to be abruptly disrupted; interfering with the ability to serve consumers.

To avoid utility scams, consider the following tips:

· Just hang up. Then call the utility provider at the phone number listed on a billing statement to confirm the authenticity of the call, inquire about the status of the account and report the fraudulent communication;

· Do not trust the number listed on caller ID. A process known as spoofing allows scammers to

change the information displayed on caller ID to give the appearance that the call is coming from a utility provider;

· Never provide personal or financial information over the phone; and

· Be wary of anyone demanding immediate payment via wire transfer, prepaid debit or gift cards.

Utility companies will not force consumers to pay over the phone as the only option and do not demand one specific type of payment. If a caller demands credit card information or payment by wire, gift card, Green Dot, MoneyPak or reloadable card, then the call is a scammer. Consumers behind on payments can contact the utility provider directly to see if the provider has any hardship programs or payment plan options to keep services running.
Consumers who believe to be a victim of a utility scam can report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by filing a complaint online at MyFloridaLegal.com or by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.