



Scam Newsletter 2020.08

Utility company calling? Don't fall for it.

July 14, 2020 by Jim Kreidler/Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

Every day, millions of people who have lost their jobs are making difficult choices about how to pay their bills.

As the Coronavirus continues to spread, scammers are taking advantage of people's heightened economic anxiety. Their latest ploy is posing as representatives from utility companies to dupe people out of their cash and personal information by convincing them their utilities will be shut off if they don't pay.

If you get a call from someone claiming to be your utility company, here are some things you can do:

- Thank the caller for the information. **Then firmly tell them you will contact the utility company directly** using the number on your bill or on the company's website.
- Even if the caller insists you have a past due bill or your services will be shut off, **never give banking information over the phone unless you place the call to a number you know is legitimate.**
- **Utility companies don't demand banking information by email or phone.** And they won't force you to pay by phone as your *only* option.
- **If the caller demands payment by gift card, cash reload card, wiring money or cryptocurrency, it is a scam.** Legitimate companies don't demand payment by gift cards (like iTunes or Amazon), cash reload cards (like MoneyPak, Vanilla, or Reloadit), or cryptocurrency (like Bitcoin).
- **Tell your friends and loved ones about the scam so they can protect themselves.** If you got this scam call, others in your community probably did to. We know when people hear about scams, they're much more likely to avoid them.

Tell the FTC. Your reports help the FTC and our law enforcement partners stop scammers.

*It's **YOUR** money – let's protect it together!*
