



## Scam Newsletter 2021.01

### Utility scams are snow joke

Emily Wu - Attorney, Federal Trade Commission

Winter often brings the blues, but when it brings Arctic blasts, burst pipes, power outages, and even icicles indoors, scammers aren't far behind with weather-related scams.

Scammers know severe weather may have shut off your electricity, heat, and water and might pose as your utility company. They might call to say that they're sorry your power went out and offer a reimbursement, but first they need your bank account information.

They might email you to say that there's an error in their system, and you have to give them personal information so they can turn your gas on again. They could even threaten to leave your utilities shut off if you don't send them money immediately. But those are all lies.

If you get one of these calls, texts, or emails, here are some things you can do:

- If you get a call, thank the caller and hang up. Never call a number left in a voicemail, text, or email. Instead, if you're worried, **contact the utility company directly using the number on your bill or on the company's website**. Verify if the message came from them.
- If you get a call out of the blue and the caller claims you have to pay a past due bill or your services will be shut off, **never give banking information over the phone**. To pay your bill over the phone, **always place the call to a number you know is legitimate**.
- **Utility companies don't demand payment information by email, text, or phone**. And they won't force you to pay by phone as your *only* option.
- If the caller tells you to pay by **gift card, cash reload card, money transfer, or cryptocurrency**, it's a **scam**. Every time. No matter what they say.

It's cold out there. Help protect your community by reporting any scams you see at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/ReportFraud).