

UTILITIES UNITED

AGAINST SCAMS



PRESS RELEASE: November 16, 2022

Local Utility Providers Join Together to Educate and Empower Customers to Spot Scams

EL PASO/LAS CRUCES – El Paso Electric, El Paso Water, Texas Gas Service, Las Cruces Utilities and Zia Natural Gas team up to raise awareness and educate customers about scams on the seventh annual Utility Scam Awareness Day set for Wednesday, November 16, 2022. Initiated by the Utilities United Against Scams, or UUAS, the scam awareness campaign focuses on educating customers on the tactics scammers use to steal their money or personal information.

Scammers utilize similar techniques to prey on customers of all five utilities that serve El Paso and Dona Ana County. Utility customers are generally the victims of scams that are conducted over the phone, online, by text, and in person. The most common tactic used by scammers is to threaten customers with service termination if they do not immediately pay using a prepared debit card, gift card, or money transfer app. Scammers may also assume the identity of electric, water, or natural gas company employees or third-party representatives for a utility.

Signs of Potential Scam Activity:

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell the customer their utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made – usually within less than an hour.
- **Request for immediate payment:** Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card or gift card – widely available at retail stores – then call them back supposedly to make a bill payment to his or her utility company.
- **Request for personal information:** Scammers may also try to gain sensitive personal information from customers. These are phishing scams when scammers trick customers into giving out personal information such as bank account numbers, passwords, social security numbers and credit card information.

How Customers Can Protect Themselves:

- **STOP:** Customers should cease all communication with scammers. Never purchase a prepaid card, gift card, or use a money transfer app. Utilities do not specify how customers should make a bill payment and they offer a variety of ways to pay a bill.
- **VERIFY:** If someone threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door, and verify their account status online or by calling their utility's Customer Service Department to inquire about their account. Never call back to a number provided by a potential scammer.
- **REPORT:** If customers suspect someone is trying to scam them or have been scammed, they should hang up, delete the email, or shut the door. They should then report the scam by calling

their utility company or through the company's website, not the phone number or website the scammer provides. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 911.

Important customer service contact information:

El Paso Electric
Texas (915) 543-5970
New Mexico (575) 526-5555
customer@epelectric.com
www.epelectric.com

El Paso Water
(915) 594-5500
www.epwater.org

Texas Gas Service
800-700-2443
www.texasgasservice.com

Las Cruces Utilities
(575) 541-2111
www.lascruces.gov/utilities

Zia Natural Gas Company
(800) 520-4277
www.zngc.com

Customers should terminate all communication and interaction with scammers immediately if they believe they have been the victims of fraud or if they feel threatened when engaging with one of them. If ever unsure about the validity of a call, communication, or engagement with a utility worker, it is crucial that customers additionally call their utilities to inquire about the status of their accounts. The [Federal Trade Commission](http://www.ftc.gov) also provides additional information about protecting personal information and other information regarding impostor scams.

Visit www.utilitiesunited.org for information and tips on how customers can protect themselves from impostor utility scams. Follow along with UUAS on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and [Facebook](https://facebook.com) and join the conversation by using #StopScams.

About Utilities United Against Scams

Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) is a consortium of more than 150 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities and their respective trade associations. UUAS is dedicated to combating impostor utility scams by providing a forum for utilities and trade associations to share data and best practices, in addition to working together to implement initiatives to inform and protect customers.

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