MPSC alerts utility customers that complaints about utility scams are on the rise in Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE October 21, 2020

Media Contact: Matt Helms **517-284-8300**
Customer Assistance: 800-292-9555
Michigan.gov/MPSC
Twitter

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Michigan Public Service Commission wants utility customers to be on alert about scammers trying to con people out of money by threatening to cut off their service.

The MPSC's Customer Assistance Division staff have heard from an increasing number of utility customers about scams in recent weeks. Frequently, callers threaten shutoffs if the customer doesn't act immediately to pay a fraudulent balance. Callers demand payment by gift card, prepaid debit card, Bitcoin, credit card or other form of payment. In some instances, callers make it appear on caller ID that the call is coming from a utility, a deliberate falsification referred to as caller ID spoofing.

Utility customers should know that utility companies will not contact customers by phone with bullying tactics such as demanding immediate payment to keep services from being shut off in a matter of hours. That kind of a behavior is a red flag that the caller is trying to scam you.

Utility companies also do not:

- Endorse or require a prepaid debit card, gift card, Bitcoin or other cryptocurrency for payments;
- Collect payment at customers' homes or businesses; or
- Ask for Social Security numbers, bank account or credit card information by phone.

In addition, utility companies do not use coercive tactics to try to get into your home. They require employees or contractors to always wear a company identification badge that the employees will be glad to show if asked.

The MPSC urges customers to be mindful about providing their account numbers or personal information such as name, address, date of birth or Social Security number. If you suspect that a call may be fraudulent, you should hang up and call your utility right away at the phone number on your most recent bill and ask to speak with a customer service representative.

Utility customers who have mistakenly provided bank account information to someone they suspect might have been an impostor should call their bank and local police department. They also may file a complaint with the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at **www.michigan.gov/ag** and the Federal Trade Commission at 877-382-4357.

*For information about the MPSC, visit **www.Michigan.gov/MPSC**, sign up for one of its **listservs**, or follow the Commission on **Twitter**.*

# # #

COPYRIGHT 2021 STATE OF MICHIGAN