



**Hawaiian
Electric**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Customers not fooled during latest surge of utility scam calls *Scammers come up empty in 70-plus calls*

HONOLULU, April 15, 2019 – Dozens of scam “robocalls” to Hawaiian Electric customers threatening disconnection were ignored last week, an encouraging sign that customers are just hanging up on scammers. Of the more than 70 scam calls reported to Hawaiian Electric, none of the customers paid out any money.

The flurry of automated calls were made on April 9 and 10. The calls are continuing; more than 10 calls were reported today. Calls were made to residents and a variety of businesses and nonprofits, everything from auto repair shops to churches.

Following a scam awareness campaign launched by local utilities last year, customers have been better able to spot fraudulent utility calls, and they should continue to be vigilant.

In the latest wave of robocalls, customers were told their power would be shut off if they did not make a payment within 30 minutes. Most of the calls directed the customer to dial another number for instructions or press 1 to pay over the phone.

One customer said he dialed the phone number he was given and was directed to pay his past due bill at a local retailer. The scammer told him to feed \$700 cash into a machine that converts it to Bitcoin, a digital currency. No payment was made.

Last year, about 200 fraud calls were reported to Hawaiian Electric, with a few dozen more reported to Maui Electric and Hawai'i Electric Light. Thousands of dollars were paid out by unsuspecting customers who believed their electricity would be disconnected.

Remember these tips for spotting scams:

- If the caller says your utility account is delinquent and threatens to shut off service immediately unless payment is made, it's a scam.
- If someone calls from a utility demanding immediate payment over the phone, via money transfer, prepaid debit cards or by Bitcoin, it's a scam.
- If the caller asks to meet the customer in person to pick up a payment, it's a scam.

If you have questions about your bill, call the customer service number listed on your bill or on the utility website.

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