



**Hawaiian Electric
Maui Electric
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hawai'i utilities ask customers to stay vigilant against aggressive scammers during Utility Scam Awareness Week

HONOLULU, Nov. 18, 2019 – The holidays are right around the corner, and Hawai'i utilities are bracing for a spike in scam calls and phishing from thieves and scam artists posing as utility workers and bill collectors. As part of national Utility Scam Awareness Week, local utilities, police and consumer experts are warning customers to remain vigilant against scammers.

The Hawaiian Electric Companies, Hawaiian Telcom, Hawai'i Gas, Board of Water Supply and Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative, along with the state Office of Consumer Protection and Honolulu Police Department are working to combat scammers who target utility customers. Customers need to be alert and recognize scams, especially when criminals threaten to disconnect service unless a payment is made.

“Utility scammers can sound convincing on the phone and will say anything to trick consumers into making payments,” said Stephen Levins, executive director of the State of Hawaii Office of Consumer Protection. “To protect themselves, consumers should never wire money, purchase gift cards, or give out personal or financial information to anyone who initiates contact.”

Scammers are targeting customers who rely on vital services such as electricity, water, gas and telecommunications. Although there have been fewer reports of customers paying money to scammers, customers cannot let their guard down.

The utilities offer the following tips:

- 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 receive an email from your utility urging you to click on an embedded link or attachment to resolve a utility issue or pay a bill, think before you click. It's likely a scam.
- If a utility worker shows up at your home or place of business, ensure that person is wearing official attire with a logo, driving a properly labeled vehicle and carrying company identification. When in doubt, call the utility's customer service center.

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