



**Hawaiian
Electric**



NEWS RELEASE

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Hawai'i utilities urge customers to stay vigilant against scammers during Utility Scam Awareness Week, pandemic

HONOLULU, Nov. 16, 2020 – Hawai'i utilities are asking customers to remain vigilant as scam calls and phishing – already more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic – ramp up heading into the holidays. The warning comes at the start of Utility Scam Awareness Week, a national event created to spotlight ripoffs aimed at utility customers.

Hawaiian Electric, Hawaiian Telcom, Hawai'i Gas, Honolulu 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 customers by posing as bill collectors and utility workers. Customers need to be alert and recognize scams, especially when criminals threaten to disconnect service unless a payment is made.

“Consumers should never wire money, purchase gift cards, or give out personal or financial information to anyone who initiates contact,” said Stephen Levins, executive director of the State of Hawai'i Office of Consumer Protection. “Remember that utility scammers will say anything, including threatening disconnection, to trick consumers into making payments.”

Scammers target residents and businesses who rely on essential services such as electricity, water, gas and telecommunications.

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. Don't be fooled by the caller ID, which can be manipulated to show a legitimate phone number.
- 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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