



**Hawaiian
Electric**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hawaiian Electric to customers: Don't get scammed! *Vigilance needed to guard against criminals after easy money*

HONOLULU, Nov. 20, 2024 – During the holiday hustle and bustle, scammers often target unsuspecting utility customers. Today, on national Utility Scam Awareness Day, Hawaiian Electric warns customers to guard against criminals taking aim at their hard-earned money.

“Scammers target utility customers because we all depend on essential services such as electricity, water and telecommunications – especially during this busy time of year,” said Brendan Bailey, Hawaiian Electric vice president of customer service. “Customers should always stay alert and vigilant. Don't let a scammer's threat of disconnection ruin your holidays.”

While the scams come in many forms, the “late payment” scam is most prevalent: Scammers threaten disconnection unless payment is made immediately – by prepaid debit cards, gift cards, Bitcoin or other unacceptable payment option.

But scammers are getting creative. Over the summer, Hawaiian Electric received seven scam reports from customers describing a different tactic – the scammer claimed to be from Hawaiian Electric, provided a “work order” number and instructed the customer to contact a “field technician” using an 800 number. The scammers demanded payment for the necessary repair or power would be disconnected.

While not all the targets were businesses, a recent common thread appeared to be real estate-related ads or listings. Among the targets was HI Five Realty LLC.

“They were saying that unless we call back and pay for repairs, they were going to terminate our service,” said Richard Nakatsu, a property manager with HI Five Realty who received the call June 17. “They're spoofing the Hawaiian Electric number.”

Nakatsu contacted Hawaiian Electric customer service, and after answering a series of questions, it appeared the scammers likely were targeting realtors. “They have their name, face and number all over the internet” and that attracts both legitimate clients and crooks, he said.

“They're relentless. With AI things are going to get worse,” said Nakatsu, who did not send money to the scammers. But a residential customer who received the same type of call paid the scammers \$1,498 through Zelle, a money transfer service offered through banking apps.

To review acceptable payment options, go to hawaiianelectric.com/paymentoptions. To file a fraud report, visit hawaiianelectric.com/reportfraud.

See next page for what Hawaiian Electric does and does not do when contacting customers.

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Beware! Don't get scammed

What we DO

- ✓ Extend courtesy phone call(s) to customers in arrears
- ✓ Mail payment reminders to households or businesses
- ✓ Email notifications to urge payment of past due balance
- ✓ Disconnection notices/letters provide:
 - Minimum of five days for customers to make payment
 - Total amount due and past due balance
- ✓ Leave door hanger reminder at customer's business or residence
- ✓ Provide available payment methods at hawaiianelectric.com/paymentoptions



What we DON'T do

- ✗ Call and threaten immediate disconnection if payment isn't made
- ✗ Send disconnection notices via text
- ✗ Demand payment information via email
- ✗ Without prior written notice, demand immediate payment and threaten to shut off electricity within the hour
- ✗ Go door-to-door collecting past due balances from customers
- ✗ Demand immediate payment over the phone, via money transfer, prepaid debit cards or by Bitcoin

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