

Special Alert:

Raising awareness of utility scams!

Con artists are everywhere, and too often they prey on unsuspecting consumers. Sometimes they even seem to know a consumer's account number or how much the person typically pays each month. The caller sounds so legitimate, but in reality the call is a scam.

These types of scams have surfaced across America over the last several years, robbing people of millions.

Co-ops and other utilities are fighting back. Last year, Utilities United Against Scams was formed and became a national effort uniting more than 100 electric, gas and water utilities and associations, to combat utility scams.

HCREMC has been increasing our communications to members to raise awareness of these frauds.

The con artist calls members from an 800 number that looks like a valid utility company. In reality, spoofing software allows the crooks to display what appears to be an official number on the caller ID! In every case, the scammer wants to convince you that your service will be shut off if you don't pay immediately with untraceable cash such as a prepaid debit card. Worse, some scammers try to con you into giving your account number and bank information over the phone.

Don't be fooled! HANG UP instead!

Know that your REMC will NEVER call you to threaten to shut off service! If you are in danger of service disconnection, you will receive written notice of issues or you can check your account status through your secure online account. Better yet, come into our office and we will work with you on any concerns you have about your bill.

Call us at 800.248.8413. We are here to help you.

Other tips:

- Never show your utility bill to anyone who comes to your door.
- Don't allow any unauthorized person or caller to "review" your account and billing information under the guise of needing this information to lower your bill. Call us first instead.
- Never give your personal information, account number or Social Security number to anyone offering a reduced rate due to a federal program. THERE IS NO SUCH THING! This is an identity theft scam!

While official energy assistance benefits do exist, check this government website to find out more. <https://www.benefits.gov/benefits/browse-by-category/category/27>

You can help raise awareness, too. Warn others about these scams and post on social media using the hashtag #stopscams. Together, we can help others from falling victim to these thieves.