



## P R E S S R E L E A S E

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BPUB Continues to Raise Awareness of Utility Scams During National Consumer Protection Week**

**BROWNSVILLE, TX** – The Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB) this week joins Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS) to recognize National Consumer Protection Week and to educate customers on how they can guard against falling victim to utility imposter scams.

As a member of UUAS, a consortium of 146 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas utilities and their respective trade associations, BPUB works across the industry with regulators, law enforcement and telecommunications partners to stop scams targeting utility customers.

"Scammers can rob customers of their hard-earned money and, in a worst-case scenario, leave them struggling to make ends meet for their household or small business," said Customer Service & IT Director Eddy Hernandez. "We will continue protecting our customers from potential scammers by providing them with tips and other resources to better protect themselves from scammers who want to steal their money and peace of mind."

#### **Signs of Potential Scam Activity:**

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell a customer that his or her utility bill is past due and that service will be disconnected if a payment is not made. Typically, the scammer will tell the customer that a disconnection will come within an hour.
- **Request for immediate payment via prepaid card:** Scammers may instruct a customer to purchase a prepaid card and call a number to make an immediate bill payment to his or her utility company. Once the funds are received from prepaid card, there is no way to refund or reverse the transaction.
- **Fraudulent electronic communications:** Scammers may disguise themselves as the utility by sending spam emails with logos, trademarks, website links and wording to lure the customer into making a false payment or providing personal information.

### **How Customers Can Protect Themselves:**

- Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. Utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment, and they always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill, including online, phone, automatic bank draft, mail, or in-person payments.
- If someone threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email or shut the door. Customers with delinquent accounts may receive an advance disconnection notification, typically by mail and sent after the regular monthly bill. Companies never send a single notification within one hour of service disconnection.
- If customers suspect a scammer, they should double check by calling their utility company at the number on their monthly bill or the company's website, not the phone number the scammer provides. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 9-1-1.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during contact with a scammer should contact BPUB and law enforcement authorities.

Visit <https://www.brownsville-pub.com/beware-of-scams/> for more information and tips on how customers can protect themselves from utility imposter scams.

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