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For Immediate Release



**Public Utilities
Commission**

**PUCO offers awareness tips for National Consumer
Protection Week**

COLUMBUS, OHIO (Mar. 4, 2019) – The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is encouraging Ohio’s utility consumers to be informed and avoid common utility scams in recognition of National Consumer Protection Week, March 3 – 9, 2019.

"The PUCO receives calls from many consumers who have been taken advantage of by utility scams." said Chief of Consumer Services Division, Nicole Moore. "It’s important that Ohioans know what to look for and how to prevent themselves from falling victim to fraud."

Signs of potential scam activity include:

1. **Threats of disconnection or shutoff.** Scammers may aggressively tell you that your utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made as soon as possible.
2. **Requests for prepaid cards or money transfers.** Your utility company has a variety of payment methods and will never instruct you to specifically use prepaid cards or money transfers at a local retail store.
3. **Demands for immediate payment.** Scammers often ask for payment to be made quickly, sometimes within the hour.

"Educate yourself now, so you don’t become the victim of a scam later," said Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost. "We have resources and experts who are working for you. These are the good guys who can help you make good choices. I encourage everyone to take advantage of those resources and stay informed."

You can avoid potential scams with a few simple tips:

1. **Ask for proper identification.** Utility employees should carry a photo ID and wear clothing that identifies their company. If you have doubts about a person

at your door or on the phone, call your utility company to verify their information before continuing.

2. **Protect your personal information.** Do not provide account or payment information to a caller that you do not know. If you have questions, call your utility company's number as listed on your bill or the company's website.
3. **Hang up on unverified calls or delete suspicious emails.** If someone threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff, customers should hang up the phone or delete the email. Utility companies will always give advanced disconnection notifications.

Consumers who think they may have been a victim of a utility scam or fraud should contact the PUCO Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or visit www.PUCO.ohio.gov.

Additionally, the PUCO ensures that utility companies provide quality, safe and reliable service through rules on installation, deposit requirements, payment arrangements and disconnection or interruption of service. Customers who encounter such issues with their utility company should contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) or www.PUCO.ohio.gov/Contact-Us/.

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The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is the sole agency charged with regulating public utility service. The role of the PUCO is to assure all residential, business and industrial consumers have access to adequate, safe and reliable utility services at fair prices while facilitating an environment that provides competitive choices. Consumers with utility-related questions or concerns can call the PUCO Call Center at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) and speak with a representative.

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