



Utility Scams on the Rise: Ameren Offers Tips to Protect Customers from Scammers During the Holiday Season

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ST. LOUIS – Utility scams are on the rise and Ameren Corporation wants to warn its customers in Illinois and Missouri about scammers using new, more sophisticated tactics to imitate utility companies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and upcoming holiday season.

Ameren is joining utility companies worldwide for the fifth consecutive year for the [Utility Scam Awareness Day](#) on Nov.18, 2020. The campaign seeks to raise awareness of scams and educate customers before they become victims.

"The best way to combat scams is to understand the tactics criminals use to trick customers into giving up personal information," said Maria Gomez, security supervisor for Ameren. "Scammers have become more sophisticated by masking phone numbers to appear that the call is from Ameren or by calling residential or business customers during busy times of the day in an effort to confuse their victims. Customers can protect themselves by looking for and recognizing the scam schemes and reporting them to the appropriate authorities."

"Unfortunately, we're seeing an increase in scam attempts as these criminals prey on our customers during this period of uncertainty and heightened anxiety," said Mary Heger, Senior Vice President, Customer Experience, Ameren Illinois. "They're deploying more aggressive tactics, like asking our customers to download payment apps like Cash App or Zelle while keeping the customer on the phone. We're asking all of our customers to be on high alert."

HOW TO SPOT A SCAM:

- Know the different forms of scams such as phone calls, text messages, in-person, and online tactics to target customers into providing personal information or payment.
- Scammers often pose as Ameren employees, threatening to disconnect or shut off service if a customer fails to make an immediate payment – typically using a prepaid card or other non-traceable form of payment.
- They also often mask incoming calls as coming from Ameren on caller ID systems, and then give a different phone number to make a payment.
- Scammers seize the opportunity to target customers during busy or high-anxiety times such as the holiday season or the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Fake case number and/or fake truck identification number: Scammers are known to record a voice message and use it to trick customers into thinking they've called the utility company. The scammer gives a fake case number and/or fake identification number of a company truck that is in the vicinity of the customer's home.

- Equipment or repair bogus fee: Scammers may call demanding a separate payment to replace or install a utility-related device or meter.
- Overpayment trick: Scammers call claiming that you've overpaid your utility bill and need to provide personal bank account information or a credit card number to facilitate a refund.

KEYS TO PROTECTING YOURSELF:

- Never give your credit card, debit card, social security, ATM, checking or saving account numbers to anyone who calls, sends a text message or email, or comes to your home requesting this information.
- Don't trust anyone asking for immediate payment. If you suspect someone is impersonating an Ameren employee, end the conversation and immediately call Ameren Illinois at 1.800.755.5000 or Ameren Missouri at 1.800.552.7583.
- Never purchase a prepaid card or download a payment app to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. Legitimate utility companies do not specify how customers should make a bill payment and always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill. Ameren customers can make payments online, by phone, electronic check, by mail or at in-person pay locations.
- For more information, visit [com/stop-scams](https://ameren.com/stop-scams). Customers should also follow Ameren on social media to receive the latest updates on scams.
- Sign up to manage your account online at [com](https://ameren.com) where you can immediately check the status of your account.

About Ameren

St. Louis-based Ameren Corporation powers the quality of life for 2.4 million electric customers and more than 900,000 natural gas customers in a 64,000-square-mile area through its Ameren Missouri and Ameren Illinois rate-regulated utility subsidiaries. Ameren Illinois provides electric transmission and distribution service and natural gas distribution service. Ameren Missouri provides electric generation, transmission and distribution service, as well as natural gas distribution service. Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois develops, owns and operates rate-regulated regional electric transmission projects. For more information, visit Ameren.com, or follow us on Twitter at @AmerenCorp, Facebook.com/AmerenCorp, or LinkedIn/company/Ameren.