

OPPD reports increase in scam attempts

(OMaha) - Omaha Public Power District is hearing from an increased number of customers this week that they have received phone calls from scammers. The utility has received more than 100 reports so far this week.

The con is nothing new. Scammers have been aggressively targeting utility customers across the country for years, now. Several times a year, like this week, OPPD receives a spike in the number of reports from our customers. Businesses tend to be targeted frequently, as callers know they cannot afford to lose electricity. However, most of the recent reports we've received have come from residential customers.

Often, scammers make it look like they're calling from OPPD's real toll-free customer service number in order to appear more legitimate, a practice known as spoofing. Callers pretend to be OPPD employees and demand payment from customers on bills they claim are overdue. They try to get their targets to give up credit, debit or checking account information over the phone to make a payment, or to purchase a payment card, such as a Green Dot card, from a nearby store. They instruct customers to call them back with the numbers from those cards.

Another tactic scammers have used in the past is to try to convince Automatic Bill Payment customers that there's been a bank error, and they need to pay ASAP to avoid shut off. Callers have also tried to convince customers they need to pay for equipment, such as a new meter.

OPPD stresses that NONE of these people demanding payments or financial information works for the utility. OPPD would NEVER cold call customers demanding immediate payment. And the utility would NEVER ask customers to purchase a pre-paid card to make a payment.

OPPD advises customers:

NEVER give personal or financial information to a stranger during an unsolicited phone call.

If such a person should appear unannounced at one's door, claiming to work for the utility, do NOT allow them inside. Always ask for identification or verification. OPPD employees always carry identification. Failure to produce identification should be a tip-off to the customer that something is wrong.

NEVER turn off security systems for any reason if a stranger asks.

Any customer who receives such a request should call law enforcement immediately.

Customers with questions about making a payment, or about their account in general, should always call OPPD directly. Within Omaha, the number is 402-536-4131.

Customers in our rural areas may talk with their local offices during business hours, as well. Outside of Omaha, customers should call 1-877-536-4131. Due to spoofing, do not trust phone calls coming in from this number and demanding payment. Hang up and dial back yourself, so you can be sure you are speaking with OPPD.

Many Signals Communications