

OPPD says scam attempts could increase

(KLZA)-- As we prepare for Thanksgiving feasts, football games and Black Friday shopping this week, Omaha Public Power District warns that scammers are likely making plans, too. This time of year, OPPD usually sees an increase in reports from customers receiving phone calls and texts from phony utility representatives seeking money.

This con has been happening for many years in the area and across the nation, with scammers falsely telling customers they owe money for overdue bills or equipment. Callers are typically aggressive, telling customers they need to buy a gift card or pre-paid credit card of some sort to settle up. Otherwise, they claim, power will be disconnected in short order. This time of year, the thieves seem to be banking on that fear of disconnection threatening family gatherings or, with business customers, jeopardizing a critical sales period.

OPPD is working in partnership with other local public power utilities to raise awareness among our customers, identify scammers' trends, and get their phone numbers shut down, when possible. In 2022, OPPD received 1,532 reports from customers who'd received scam calls. So far this year, we've received 444 reports. However, our residential and business customers should remain vigilant and remember the following:

NONE of these calls are from the utility. OPPD call center representatives would never cold-call a customer demanding immediate payment. If customers were truly overdue on their bills to the point where service could be disconnected, they would receive written notice first.

- Authentic utility representatives NEVER request payment via a purchased payment card.**
- NEVER give personal or financial information to a stranger during an unsolicited phone call.**
- If somebody shows up to your door claiming to work for the utility and wanting to enter, do not allow them inside. Utility employees should not need to enter your home to conduct their work. ALWAYS ask for identification or verification. OPPD employees always carry identification. Failure to produce identification should always be a tip-off to the customer that something is wrong.**
- Be wary of sales pitches from companies claiming to represent or work with OPPD.**

Customers with questions about their service or bill status, or needing financial assistance, should call OPPD at 877-536-4131 outside of the Omaha area.

Many Signals Communications