

FirstEnergy Corp.
76 S. Main Street
Akron, OH 44308
www.firstenergycorp.com

For Release: November 18, 2019

News Media Contact:
Lauren Siburkis
(330) 203-5580

FirstEnergy Utilities Ramp Up Scam Awareness Outreach As Cold Winter Weather Arrives

Akron, Ohio – As winter arrives and temperatures drop, FirstEnergy utility customers should be on high alert for phone calls or door-to-door visits from scammers trying to trick them into paying fictional unpaid bills to avoid immediate shutoff.

Realizing scammers feed off people’s fear of losing heat in the cold weather, FirstEnergy and dozens of other electric and gas companies are banding together for Utility Scam Awareness Week, held Nov. 17-23, to prevent customers from falling victim to scams this season. The annual awareness week is organized by Utilities United Against Scams – a group consisting of more than 100 utilities and related organizations – to educate the public about the ever-growing list of scams targeting utility customers.

“We take our customers’ safety and security very seriously,” said Gary W. Grant, vice president of customer service for FirstEnergy Utilities. “Scammers can be very convincing and often target our most vulnerable customers, particularly senior citizens.”

To date in 2019, FirstEnergy’s utilities have received more than 1,600 reports of scams from customers – outpacing last year’s total number of reported scams by more than 200. The actual number of scam attempts is even higher since many go unreported to the company or law enforcement officials.

Although the scammers work year-round, they are most active in the winter and summer months, when people are most concerned about not having heat or air conditioning.

With a goal of keeping customers informed about all types of utility scams, FirstEnergy's award-winning video, ["Hang Up, Don't Pay Up: When a Scammer Calls,"](#) features two business owners contacted by phone scammers impersonating FirstEnergy electric company employees. The video – which has been viewed more than 150,000 times – provides red flags and tips for avoiding scams.

FirstEnergy customers are urged to keep the following information in mind to help ensure the safety of their family, property and personal information:

- Customers who are behind on their accounts receive written notices of a possible disconnection and how to prevent it. FirstEnergy representatives will not call or email to demand immediate payment to avoid a same-day shutoff.
- While FirstEnergy representatives often make courtesy calls to customers to remind them about an outstanding balance, they would explain how a payment can be made using the established payment options. They would never require a customer to purchase a pre-paid money card as the only acceptable means of payment.
- FirstEnergy field collectors working in New Jersey, Maryland and Ohio – carrying company-issued photo identification – will offer customers with past-due accounts the opportunity to pay their bill in person before shutting them off.
- FirstEnergy employees do not contact customers to request sensitive information such as social security numbers or bank account information.
- Scammers often use Caller ID spoofing software to misrepresent the source of a phone call to further mislead and confuse their targets. Call-back numbers provided by these criminals often use greetings and hold messages that mimic legitimate businesses.

- If customers have any doubts about the status of their electric service, they should call their utility company using the [customer service phone number listed on the FirstEnergy website](#) to ask about their account. Never dial the phone number the scammer provides.
- Customers who suspect a scam should hang up the phone or close the door and call the local police then FirstEnergy.

“We encourage customers to contact us directly using the phone number listed on our website and on their billing statement if they need to verify the status of their electric account or confirm the identity of a FirstEnergy employee,” said Grant. “When in doubt, always give us a call.”

FirstEnergy (NYSE:FE) is dedicated to safety, reliability and operational excellence. Its 10 electric distribution companies form one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems, serving customers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Maryland and New York. The company's transmission subsidiaries operate more than 24,500 miles of transmission lines that connect the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions. Visit FirstEnergy online at www.firstenergycorp.com and follow FirstEnergy and its operating companies on Twitter [@FirstEnergyCorp](#), [@OhioEdison](#), [@ToledoEdison](#), [@IlluminatingCo](#), [@W Penn Power](#), [@Penn Power](#), [@Penelec](#), [@Met Ed](#), [@JCP L](#), [@PotomacEdison](#), [@MonPowerWV](#).

(111819)