

## News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **BGE and Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh Are Joining Together to Warn Customers of Scams During the Holiday Season**

**BALTIMORE** (Nov. 20, 2019) – With the holiday season quickly approaching, BGE is reminding customers to always be on alert for potential payment scams targeting utility customers. Scams occur throughout the year, but the company has seen an increase in scam reports during the holiday season. With holiday shopping and family gatherings planned, scammers are using the holiday season to trick utility customers into providing their personal or financial information and making false payments under the pretense of keeping their service active.

BGE is joining more than 100 utility companies across the United States and Canada in the effort to protect customers from scams targeting customers of electric, natural gas, water, and other utilities. Collaborating companies have joined together for a fourth year and designated November 20 as “Utilities United Against Scams Day.” Utility Scam Awareness Day is part of the week-long National Scam Awareness Week, an advocacy and awareness campaign focused on educating customers and exposing the tactics used by scammers. BGE and its sister Exelon companies, Atlantic City Electric, ComEd, Delmarva Power, PECO and Pepco are committed to educating customers and putting a stop to scamming.

This year, Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh’s office is also partnering with BGE to help educate Maryland about the need to stay vigilant against scammers. So far in 2019, BGE customers have reported losing close to \$170,000 to scammers and imposters. According to the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, over the last three years they have received over 61 utility scam complaints and some victims have reported losing as much as \$4,000 dollars to the scams.

“Utilities United Against Scams Day is very important for BGE,” said Rodney Oddoye, vice president and chief customer officer for BGE. “Unfortunately, scammers are constantly changing their tactics and it’s important that our customers have the most up to date information on these scams in order to help them avoid becoming victims.”

“Utility scammers use fear and intimidation to get you to believe your electricity, water, or other utility shut off is imminent,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Legitimate utilities would never give only one hour’s notice. These scammers don’t just go after individuals; business owners should also be suspicious if they receive a call or visit from someone threatening to shut off a utility. Always contact the utility directly using the telephone number on your bill if you suspect there is a problem.”

It is not uncommon for scammers to call, text, or email utility customers asking for immediate payment to avoid service disconnection. As a reminder, utilities will never send a single notification to a customer

within one hour of a service interruption, and they never will ask their customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, or any form of cryptocurrency.

Scammers have even duplicated the upfront Interactive Voice Response system of some companies, so when customers call the number provided by the scammer, it sounds like a legitimate business. Some scammers also use caller ID "spoofing" to replicate a utility's phone number.

### **Red flags for scam activity**

- The scammer often becomes angry and tells a customer his or her account is past due and service will be shut off if a large payment isn't made – usually within less than an hour.
- The scammer instructs the customer to purchase a prepaid debit or credit card – widely available at most retail stores – then call him or her back to make a payment.
- The scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card's receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the funds loaded to the card.
- The scammer asks for a copy of the customer's utility bill.

### **How to protect yourself**

- Utility representatives will never ask or require a customer with a past due balance to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Customers can make payments online, by phone, automatic bank withdrawal, mail or in person.
- Customers with a past due balance will receive multiple shut off notifications – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.
- If a customer ever questions the legitimacy of the call, hang up and call BGE at 800-685-0123.
- BGE already has your account information and past bills. If you are authorizing a legitimate third party energy supplier to switch your energy supply, they will need you to disclose your electric choice ID or natural gas choice ID at the time you are authorizing to be switched to their service. If you do not intend to switch your energy supplier, do not provide your choice ID number(s) or a copy of your bill to anyone.

### **Don't Get Scammed: Customers can avoid being scammed by taking a few precautions:**

- **Never provide your social security number or personal information** to anyone initiating contact with you claiming to be a utility representative or requesting you to send money to another person or entity other than your local utility providers.
- **Always ask to see a company photo ID** before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.
- **Never give payment in any form- cash, check, or credit- to anyone coming to your door.**

Any customer who believes he or she has been a target of a scam is urged to contact their local police and call BGE immediately at 800-685-0123 to report the situation.

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BGE, founded in 1816 as the nation's first gas utility and headquartered in Baltimore, is Maryland's largest natural gas and electric utility. The company's approximately 3,200 employees are committed to safe and reliable energy delivery to more than 1.25 million electric customers and more than 650,000 natural gas customers in central Maryland. In the J.D. Power 2017, 2018, and 2019 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study <sup>SM</sup> BGE was ranked Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Business Electric Service in the East among Large Utilities. In addition, in the J.D. Power 2018 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study <sup>SM</sup> BGE received Best in Customer Satisfaction with Business Natural Gas Service in the East. BGE is a subsidiary of Exelon Corporation (Nasdaq: EXC), the nation's leading competitive energy provider. Connect with BGE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#), and engage with the latest BGE stories on [bgenow.com](#).

Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (or "BGE") received the highest score in the East Large segment of the 2019 Electric Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study and the East Region of the 2018 Gas Utility Business Customer Satisfaction Study of electric and gas utility customer satisfaction among business customers. Visit [jdpower.com/awards](#).