



SCAM ALERT

CONTACT Becky Wilson, Community Affairs Director
Office (720) 733-5546 Cell (303) 870-3710

Friday, August 31, 2018

IREA cautions customers about new scam targeting small businesses

SEDALIA – Businesses served by IREA recently have been targeted by scammers. IREA is informing business owners and customers about these scams so they can avoid falling victim to them.

Many of these recent scam attempts ask business owners to pay up front for new meters as part of IREA's upcoming advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) project. IREA will **not** ask you to pay for these new meters. You should immediately doubt the legitimacy of any call, email or in-person visit in which you are asked for payment, especially in the form of a "Green Dot" or other pre-paid card. If you are asked for such payment or are unsure of any other interaction with someone claiming to represent or work with IREA, immediately call us at (800) 332-9540.

New meters eventually will be installed, in phases, at all locations served within IREA's 5,000-square-mile service territory. IREA employees and IREA-managed contractors will install them and will not ask for payment. We will notify you before and after your old meter is replaced; be suspicious if any individual requests access to your business or residential meter or property with no prior notification.

This meter payment angle is just the latest trend in sophisticated scam attempts. Many are crafted to exploit owners and managers at crucial business hours, and they often are very convincing. One recent scam victim, for example, was contacted during his establishment's busy lunch hours. Under the threat of immediate termination of electric service, he purchased and provided to the scammers pre-paid cards totaling thousands of dollars.

To avoid falling victim to this or other scams, remember the following:

- IREA does not call customers to demand immediate payment. Our disconnect notification calls are automated and instruct customers to contact us directly at (800) 332-9540 for payment.



- IREA does not request payment via pre-paid credit card. Any request for this type of payment is a scam.
- IREA does not ask for bank account or credit card info in order to issue refunds. Our policy is to either credit your account or print and mail a check.
- IREA employees who visit a business or residence on a service call always carry identification badges, wear uniforms clearly identifying them as IREA employees and typically drive our signature yellow work trucks with the IREA logo. Contractors working on our behalf also carry identification and credentials identifying them as IREA contractors. Ask for ID; scammers will often quickly depart if you inform them you are calling to confirm their identity.
- Do not hesitate to call us directly at (800) 332-9540 if you at all doubt the legitimacy of any phone call, in-person visit, text message, email or other communication from someone claiming to work for IREA. We can quickly confirm whether it is legitimate.
- Scammers have left messages with IREA customers, asking them to call back to a 1-800 number. When customers call the number, they get an automated system that sounds similar to IREA's, making it seem as if they are calling IREA. When they select a "billing and payment" option, they are then routed to a scammer who will urge the customer to make immediate payment to avoid having power disconnected. These scammers can be very convincing. Remember, when in doubt, call IREA directly at (800) 332-9540.
- Scammers often target a large number of businesses in a short period of time. Immediately contacting IREA when you suspect a scam helps us alert other customers.

IREA is part of several industry-wide efforts to prevent scams, including Utilities United Against Scams, which offers resources for both utilities and their customers via www.UtilitiesUnited.org. IREA customers can also look to our social media channels – @IREAColorado on Twitter and IntermountainREA on Facebook – and website, www.IREA.coop, for info on potential scams.