



Scams targeting utility customers on the rise during COVID-19 pandemic; Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas warn of scammers' latest tactics

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- **Duke Energy reports record number of reported scam attempts against its customers in June**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Scams targeting electric and natural gas customers are on the rise, with imposters implementing new tactics during the COVID-19 pandemic to trick utility customers out of money and personal information.

June 2020 was the highest single month on record for reported scam attempts targeting Duke Energy customers, hitting more than 4,000.

The total number of scam attempts reported by Duke Energy customers so far in 2020 – more than 15,000 – already is approaching 2019’s full-year total of 18,000.

“Unfortunately, the scammers appear to be preying on the uncertainty and financial hardship caused by the pandemic, and they are tracking trends and adjusting their tactics,” said Jared Lawrence, Duke Energy’s vice president of revenue services and metering. “As new scam techniques are employed, it is imperative that customers stay alert, informed and make a concerted effort to guard their personal information and wallets.”

New tactic

Scammers have added a new tactic, which promises to mail customers refund checks for overpayments on their accounts if they can confirm their personal data, including birthdays and, in some cases, social security numbers.

Generally, Duke Energy and subsidiary Piedmont Natural Gas will apply refunds as a credit to customers’ accounts and will not contact customers to verify personal information by phone, email or in person in order to mail a check.

Phone scam

Scam reports also indicate that phone scammers posing as utility providers continue to call and insist customers are delinquent on their bills. The scammer typically claims a service disconnection is pending, rigs caller ID to mimic your utility provider, and demands an immediate payment in the form of a prepaid debit card.

Note: Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas have currently suspended disconnections for nonpayment.

Common scam tactics include:

- A call with pre-recorded voice, often referred to as a robocall, with a caller ID display showing the customer’s utility’s name.
- A mimicked Interactive Voice Response menu that customers typically hear when they call their utility.

- Threats to disconnect power or natural gas service to a customer's home or business within an hour.
- Immediate payment demands by prepaid debit card.
- And, with many utilities suspending nonpay disconnections during the COVID-19 pandemic, scammers are now promising refund checks if the customer makes a payment and the pending disconnect was an error.

Customers who suspect they have been victims of fraud or who feel threatened during an interaction with one of these scammers should:

- Hang up the phone, especially if it's a robocall requesting personal information or requesting an immediate payment by prepaid debit card or gift card to avoid disconnection within an hour.
- Call the utility provider by using the phone number provided on the bill or on the company's official website, followed by a call to the police.
- Never purchase a prepaid debit card or gift card to make an immediate payment to avoid a service disconnection or shutoff. Legitimate utility companies do not specify how customers should make a payment, and they always offer a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

Customers can learn about recent scams and how to recognize the warning signs on the Federal Trade Commission website www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts.

Duke Energy is also a founding member of Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS), a consortium of more than 140 U.S. and Canadian electric, water, and natural gas companies (and their respective trade associations) that raises awareness of utility scams targeting customers. Duke Energy's Lawrence is also the UUAS founder and executive committee chair.

Visit duke-energy.com/stopscams or utilitiesunited.org for more information and tips about how customers can protect themselves from impostor utility scams, or follow along on social media: Twitter [@DukeEnergy](https://twitter.com/DukeEnergy) or [@U_U_A_S](https://twitter.com/U_U_A_S) and Facebook [@Duke Energy](https://facebook.com/DukeEnergy) or [@UtilitiesUnited](https://facebook.com/UtilitiesUnited).

Duke Energy

Duke Energy (NYSE: DUK), a Fortune 150 company headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., is one of the largest energy holding companies in the U.S. It employs 29,000 people and has an electric generating capacity of 51,000 megawatts through its regulated utilities and 2,300 megawatts

through its nonregulated Duke Energy Renewables unit.

Duke Energy is transforming its customers' experience, modernizing the energy grid, generating cleaner energy and expanding natural gas infrastructure to create a smarter energy future for the people and communities it serves. The Electric Utilities and Infrastructure unit's regulated utilities serve 7.8 million retail electric customers in six states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. The Gas Utilities and Infrastructure unit distributes natural gas to 1.6 million customers in five states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky. The Duke Energy Renewables unit operates wind and solar generation facilities across the U.S., as well as energy storage and microgrid projects.

Duke Energy was named to Fortune's 2020 "World's Most Admired Companies" list and Forbes' "America's Best Employers" list. More information about the company is available at [duke-energy.com](https://www.duke-energy.com). The [Duke Energy News Center](#) contains news releases, fact sheets, photos, videos and other materials. Duke Energy's [illumination](#) features stories about people, innovations, community topics and environmental issues. Follow Duke Energy on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Piedmont Natural Gas

Piedmont Natural Gas, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, is an energy services company whose principal business is the distribution of natural gas to more than 1 million residential, commercial and industrial customers in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The company also supplies natural gas to power plants. Piedmont is routinely recognized by J.D. Power for excellent customer satisfaction, and has been named by Cogent Reports as one of the most trusted utility brands in the U.S.

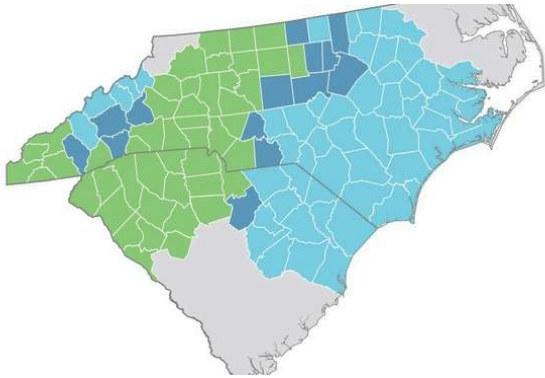
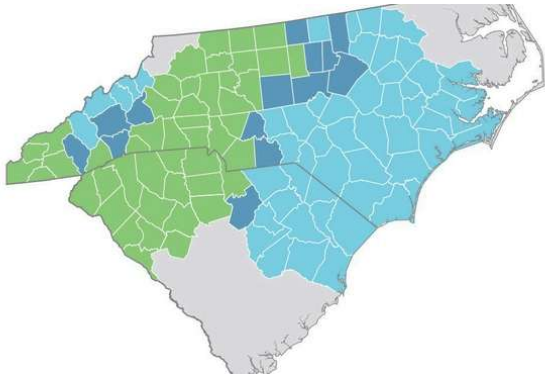
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