

## ***New Year, New Scammer Tactics***

PSE&G warns customers to be alert for requests for payments via digital payment apps

**(NEWARK, N.J. – January 29, 2021)** With a new year comes new tactics as scammers continue trying to extract money from PSE&G customers by impersonating employees on the phone and in person. PSE&G urges customers to be alert for the telltale signs of a scam.

PSE&G has observed a recent increase in scammers contacting customers and falsely alleging overdue balances and threatening to shut off power without immediate payment. At this time, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PSE&G has suspended any service disconnections for residential customers.

While the common scam tactic of requesting a prepaid debit card to provide payment available at local pharmacies and convenience stores is still active, some con artists are now demanding payment via digital payment platforms or apps.

PSE&G does not accept payments through prepaid debit cards or third party mobile payment applications. PSE&G offers a variety of [payment options](#) and would never require one specific type of payment. For more information on various payment scams reported in the PSE&G service area and around the country, visit [pseg.com/scamalert](http://pseg.com/scamalert).

“Scammers give you a reason to panic and then offer you a quick resolution via payment. They want you to react quickly, without thinking clearly,” said Fred Daum, PSE&G’s executive director of Customer Operations. “By demanding payment via apps, the scammer is further reducing your time to think by eliminating your trip to the convenience store to buy the prepaid card. With this method, you don’t get the chance to pause and say, ‘Hey, wait a minute,’ while you’re waiting on line at the store.”

### **Signs of potential scam activity:**

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively tell the customer their utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made — usually within an hour.
- **Request for immediate payment:** Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card, a gift card or even Bitcoin, and then to call them back — supposedly to make a phone payment to the utility company. They may request that the customer use a payment app to make an online payment — or even give instructions for an in-person meeting, supposedly at a utility customer center. Many times after the customer makes the first payment, the scammer will call back to ask for the payment to be resubmitted due to an error with the amount. The scammer refers to a new amount and claims that the original payment will be refunded. Sometimes they will call a third time to say the payment did not go through and to resubmit again.
- **In person-demands:** Scammers may arrive at a home or business, flash a fake ID and/or claim to be a utility collection representative. The impostors may wear “uniforms” or affix false company signs to their vehicles. The scammers generally ask for personal information, which real utility representatives do not do, or offer bogus discounts.
- **Request for card information:** If a customer calls back with requested information, the caller asks the customer for the prepaid card’s number or gift-card PIN, which grants the scammer instant access to the card’s funds, and the victim’s money is gone.
- **Priority meter installs:** Recent phone scams reported to PSE&G include demands for payment for past-due bills, discounts for good payment history or requiring a deposit for a priority meter installation. PSE&G does not require a deposit for meter installations. Often scammers will threaten to disconnect electric service if payment is not made immediately. These scammers often demand payment through a pre-paid cards or Bitcoin. If the victim takes the bait, the scammer provides a telephone number where a fake representative requests additional information that completes the fraudulent transaction.



### **Protect yourself against scams:**

Be alert to the telltale sign of a scam: someone asking by telephone or email for payment in pre-paid debit cards or a MoneyGram transfer, or to send money to an out-of-state address.

Never arrange payment or divulge account or personal information, including Social Security numbers or debit or credit card information, over the telephone unless you are certain you are speaking to a PSE&G representative.

Customers should also know what PSE&G will and won't discuss over the phone. A genuine PSE&G representative will ask to speak to the "Customer of Record." If that person is available, the representative will explain why they are calling and provide the account name, address and current balance. If the person on the phone does not provide the correct information, it is likely the customer is not speaking with a PSE&G representative.

If the "Customer of Record" is not available, the PSE&G representative will not discuss the account at all and ask that a message be left for the "Customer of Record" to call 1-800-436-PSEG (7734).

If a customer has doubts about the legitimacy of a call or an email — especially one in which payment is requested — call the company directly at 1-800-436-PSEG (7734).

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### **PSE&G**

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