

WALTHAM, MASS. - Reported utility billing and payment scams are resurfacing once again in New England. National Grid is warning its customers to beware and know the signs of a scam.

Customers who reported the scams say they were contacted by telephone by individuals who claim to be from National Grid and who advised the customers they have a past due balance on their utility bill.

The scammers warn that service will be shut off immediately unless the customer purchases a prepaid debit card in a specific amount, such as Green Dot card, and provides the caller with the card's account number, or in the case of business customers, by way of a Western Union money transfer. This is a huge warning sign.

The scenario can change, but the goal of the scammer remains the same: scare customers into making hasty, often large payments.

National Grid does contact customers with past due balances by phone to offer payment options, but never demands direct payment through the use of a prepaid debit card and never accepts payment through these cards.

Scam artists have become increasingly sophisticated in replicating National Grid's recorded messaging and directions for phone prompts, making it more difficult to differentiate an actual National Grid call from an imposter's call. Similar scams have been reported across the U.S. by other utilities.

Customers who believe they have fallen victim to the scam should contact National Grid and local law enforcement officials immediately.

**National Grid urges customers to know the red flags and offers the following tips:**

- Customers should always contact National Grid using the toll-free telephone numbers listed on the billing statement. If you are provided a phone number that does not match the numbers on the billing statement, it is likely the call is a scam.
- Be vigilant. If you believe you are current on your National Grid account, it is highly likely a call seeking payment is a scam.

- Protect yourself. ***Ask the caller to provide the last five digits of your National Grid account number.*** If the caller doesn't know your account number and fishes for help, take charge and hang up immediately.
- Do not take the bait. ***Scammers will not have access to your account information, and you should never offer that information if asked.*** National Grid representatives will know your account number.
- National Grid may ask for a payment over the phone, but will leave the method of payment to the customer.
- Do not fall for scare tactics and threats. National Grid will not contact customers demanding immediate payment by wire transfer, Green Dot Money-Pak or any other prepaid card service.
- Do not cave to pressure. ***Never -- under any circumstances -- offer personal or financial information to someone who you cannot identify.***
- Every National Grid employee carries a photo ID card, and any contractor doing work for the company is also required to carry ID. If someone requesting entry into your home or place of business does not show an ID card, do not let that person in and please call National Grid or local law enforcement.