



Avoiding Scam Artists

The Idaho Falls Police Department is warning residents to be aware of scam artists intent on separating you from your hard-earned money.

One of the more common tactics recently is for scammers to pose as utility representatives calling by phone to collect payment for an overdue bill. The scammer threatens to shut off electric service unless the victim will pay his or her bill immediately, with a credit card.

It might seem like an easy scam to avoid. But, when it's cold outside and your family's safety could be endangered if the power is shut off for the night, you might be tempted to pull out your debit or credit card and take care of the situation.

Don't be tempted.

No one from Idaho Falls Power or the city Utilities office will ever call you demanding immediate payment for an overdue bill. And your power would never be shut off on such short notice, particularly in the winter.

City utility workers responsible for collecting on delinquent accounts do make house calls, but they all carry city identification and wear uniforms identifying them as city employees.

They won't ask you for account information, either; they'll have that information with them. They do collect money from customers, but only after a disconnect notice has been sent and the Utility worker is on scene to disconnect the service. Also, they will always provide a receipt upon payment.

Commercial accounts are handled slightly differently. Collections staff may call commercial account-holders who've fallen behind on their payments. Instead of demanding payment, however, the staff will work to arrange a payment schedule to avoid disconnection of service. They will let the manager or business owner know how much needs to be paid to avoid this inconvenience.

Tips for avoiding scams:

- **Ask for verification:** IFP and Utilities employees rarely call residential customers. If they do, however, they will know the customer's name and address, account number and account balance. If you suspect a scammer is on the other end of the line, hang up and call the Utilities office at 612-8280.
- **Keep your information safe:** Do not provide account information to any caller. No one from Idaho Falls Power or the city Utilities office will ever ask for account information.
- **You always have options:** A number of payment options are available to customers and the Utilities office can usually work out a payment arrangement for a customer who has fallen behind on his bill.
- **Please report scam calls:** If you receive a suspicious call, write down the phone number if you have Caller ID, hang up and call the police.

If someone comes to your door:

- **Did you have an appointment?** IFP employees who conduct energy audits or other projects that require home visits always make appointments. Collections agents with the Utilities office often don't have an appointment, but they drive city vehicles, wear marked clothing, carry ID and all pertinent account information, and will provide a receipt for any payment made. Meter readers will never collect payment.
- **Check the vehicle:** IFP and city Utilities employees drive white or yellow vehicles bearing the IFP logo or city logo.
- **Ask to see ID:** City employees always carry ID cards.
- **Verify:** To confirm the person at your door is an IFP or Utilities employee, ask them to wait outside and call either IFP at 612-8526 or the Utilities office at 612-8280.
- **Please report scam artists:** If you believe a visitor or caller is a scam artist posing as a utility employee, or that you have been the victim of a scam, call IFPD at 522-1800.