

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 15, 2016



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Denise Rodriguez

NIPSCO Communications

1-219-381-7217

NIPSCO Joins National Energy Industry Efforts to Help Protect Customers from Utility Scammers

Merrillville, Ind. — Electric and natural gas providers across the United States and Canada are joining forces to protect customers from long-running scams targeting their customers.

The Utilities United Against Scams collaboration has designated November 16 as Utilities United Against Scams Day. This day will be supported by a weeklong campaign with content focused on exposing the tricks scammers use to steal money from customers, and how customers can protect themselves.

The collaborative effort encourages the public to share these messages to help guard against scam activity, which typically picks up during the holiday season, but occurs throughout the year.

The most common scam reported by NIPSCO customers involves an unsolicited phone call. In this scam, a customer receives an unsolicited phone call from an individual who falsely claims to be a NIPSCO representative. The scammer warns that the customer's service will be disconnected if the customer fails to make a payment – usually within a short time frame.

Often, scammers will provide a phone number to call back, which is different from the company's official and published 1-800 customer service phone number. They duplicate and record the company's automated customer service phone system, giving the appearance of an authentic-sounding 1-800 when customers dial the number provided by the scammer. Some of these criminals also use caller ID spoofing to replicate customer service number when they make an outbound call.

Red flags for scam activity

- The thief becomes angry and tells the customer his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment isn't made – usually within less than an hour.
- The thief instructs the customer to purchase a prepaid debit or credit card – widely available at retail stores – then call him or her back to supposedly make a payment.
- The scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card's receipt number and PIN number, which grants instant access to the card's funds.

How to protect yourself

- Remember that NIPSCO never asks for or requires a customer with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection.
- Customers can make payments online, by phone, by mail or in person.
- Keep in mind that customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notice – never a single notification one hour before disconnection.

Customers who suspect or experience fraud, or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scams, should contact local authorities, and then call NIPSCO at 1-800-464-7726 (1-800-4-NIPSCO).

The company continues to work with law enforcement, other energy companies and the media to help combat scams and protect customers.

For more information on scams and how to protect yourself, visit NIPSCO.com/StaySafe or follow NIPSCO on Facebook and Twitter.

About NIPSCO: *Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), with headquarters in Merrillville, Indiana, has proudly served the energy needs of northern Indiana for more than 100 years. As Indiana's largest natural gas distribution company and the state's second-largest electric distribution company, NIPSCO serves approximately 810,000 natural gas and 460,000 electric customers across 32 counties. NIPSCO is part of NiSource's (NYSE: NI) seven regulated utility companies. NiSource is one of the largest fully regulated utility companies in the United States, serving approximately 4 million natural gas and electric customers through its local Columbia Gas and NIPSCO brands. More information about NIPSCO and NiSource is available at NIPSCO.com and NiSource.com.*

###