

PUCN Connection

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM the PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF NEVADA

Produced by the PUCN's Outreach & Public Information Offices

December 2020 Edition

Attorney General Warns of Utility Imposter Scams Involving QR Codes

Nevada Attorney General Aaron D. Ford is warning Nevadans to be cautious of increasingly sophisticated utility imposter scams as winter approaches and COVID-19 cases increase. Scammers attempt to mislead and defraud consumers and small local business owners.

"Scammers use technology to capitalize on times of uncertainty and hardship," said AG Ford. "Protect yourself and your family by learning how to identify utility imposter scams involving QR codes sent directly to your smart phone."

Imposter scams, both online and over the phone, come in many forms. The basic utility imposter scam involves a scammer posing as a member of a reputable utility company demanding money from unsuspecting customers. These types of scams unfortunately victimize both the consumer and the utility company.

In a typical utility imposter scam, the scammer often calls from a number that has been "spoofed" to look like it belongs to the actual company; however, it is just an attempt to add legitimacy to the scam. The scammer usually explains that the

consumer is behind on his or her utility bill and demands immediate payment to avoid a shutoff of utilities.

A new sophisticated twist to this basic scam involves the scammer requesting the consumer to go to a bill pay kiosk while the scammer remains on the phone. The scammer instructs the consumer to pay the bill pay kiosk in cash so the payment cannot be tracked. The scammer then texts a QR code to the consumer's smart phone and instructs the consumer to scan the code at the bill pay kiosk. The scammer will tell the consumer the QR code is a "link" to the consumer's utility account sent to the consumer to help ensure the consumer's payment goes directly toward the consumer's unpaid balance. However, in reality, the QR code is linked directly to the scammer's account. Once the consumer puts the cash into the bill pay kiosk and scans the QR code, the consumer has unknowingly made a payment to the scammer, not to the utility.



A sample QR code.

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PUBLIC COMMENT at PUCN AGENDA MEETINGS

On March 22, Governor Sisolak signed an emergency declaration suspending the requirement that public bodies in Nevada provide a physical location for the public to attend and participate in meetings. The public may comment at PUCN agenda meetings by phone or email. These procedures are in place until further notice.

PHONE: (775) 687-6014

Call in five minutes before the meeting starts to provide your name to PUCN personnel.

EMAIL: BPA@PUC.NV.GOV

Submit written comments prior to the meeting.

Links to agenda meeting supporting material and the live video stream of agenda meetings are available at puc.nv.gov.



Public Utilities Commission of Nevada | puc.nv.gov



Utility Imposter Scams: *continued from page 1*

Typically, utility companies send at least two past due notices in writing before disconnecting or terminating service, and consumers should be suspicious if they receive a threatening phone call, suspicious text message or in-person visit with no prior written notice. If you receive a phone call, text message or in-person visit without having received written notice, call your utility company directly using the number on your bill to discuss the status of your account.

Ask for details about your account to verify whether the caller is legitimate. If the caller is unable or unwilling to provide details such as dates and amounts of prior invoices and payments, hang up and call the utility company directly.

Remember, individuals of all ages and walks of life are susceptible to scams. Whether you are a college student or senior, do not hesitate to ask your family and friends about a suspicious text message or phone call you received from a potential scammer. Bring in people that you trust.

The Office of the Nevada Attorney General suggests the following additional tips to avoid utility imposter scams:

- If you are being pressured to make an immediate payment, remain calm and ask questions to confirm your account status before making a payment.

- Don't agree to make payments by wire transfer or with a prepaid card over the telephone. A legitimate utility representative will explain to a customer how a payment can be made using the utility's established payment options, and will not demand payment over the phone.
- Don't feel pressured by an upcoming weekend or holiday. According to the [Public Utilities Commission of Nevada's website](#), a utility company may not disconnect or terminate service the day before a weekend, on the weekend or on a State holiday, unless a safety issue requires disconnection.

These tips also apply if a utility company representative comes to your home to demand payment for a past due account. In this situation, ask to view an identification badge with the representative's full name, and then call the utility company directly to discuss the status of your account.

If you believe you have been a victim of a scam, you may file a complaint with the Office of the Nevada Attorney General [here](#) or with the Federal Trade Commission [here](#).

The Office of the Nevada Attorney General encourages Nevadans to protect their health and personal and financial information. For additional helpful information regarding the status of COVID-19 in Nevada, visit the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services website [here](#).

Reporting Fraud Helps Everyone — and Now It's Easier

In October, the Federal Trade Commission launched [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#), a new website that makes it easy for people to report fraud, scams, and bad business practices.

For ideas of what you might report to the FTC, check out [consumer.ftc.gov](#) for more information and advice, or take a look at the FTC's latest cases at [ftc.gov](#).

Whether you think it's a scam, you know it is, or you're not happy about a business practice, tell the FTC. The FTC and its law enforcement partners enforce a variety of laws. Your report is shared with more than 3,000 law enforcers and can help spot problems.

Is your report about any of these common problems?

Don't see your problem? Choose "Something else."

An impersonator
(ex. fake government, business, love interest, grandchild)

Job, money-making opportunity

Phone, internet, TV service

Health
(ex. weight loss, eye care, treatment)

Just an annoying call

Online shopping

Sweepstakes, prize, lottery

Auto sale, repair

Credit, debt
(ex. debt collection, credit report, loan)

Something else
(we'll get it to the right place)

Who were they pretending to be?

Government authority or agency
(ex. Social Security, IRS, Medicare, police)

Grandchild, family member, or friend

Your boss or co-worker

Well-known or trusted business
(ex. tech support, utility company, bank)

Love interest
(ex. someone on a dating site)

Charity or charitable cause

Screenshot of the FTC's online fraud reporting form at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#).

[Get started now](#). Or browse the [FTC's FAQs](#).

Dockets Opened at the PUCN in November 2020

Visit puc.nv.gov/Dockets/Dockets/ to view documents filed in the dockets listed below.

Docket	Date Filed	Description
20-11001	11/02/2020	Application of Moapa Valley Telephone Company, filed under Advice Letter No. 21, to revise Tariff No. 2A to add clarifying language regarding the Federal Lifeline Support Credit for Lifeline customers pursuant to Federal Communications Commission Docket No. FCC 16-38.
20-11002	11/02/2020	Application of Lincoln County Telephone System, Inc., filed under Advice Letter No. 23, to revise Tariff No. 1A to add clarifying language regarding the Federal Lifeline Support Credit for Lifeline customers pursuant to Federal Communications Commission Docket No. FCC 16-38.
20-11003	11/02/2020	Application of Rural Telephone Company, filed under Advice Letter No. 40, to revise Tariff No. 1 to add clarifying language regarding the Federal Lifeline Support Credit for Lifeline customers pursuant to Federal Communications Commission Docket No. FCC 16-38.
20-11004	11/05/2020	Joint Application of Avalon Geothermal, Inc. ("Avalon") and MIP V Tierra Holdings II, LLC ("MIP") for approval of a proposed transaction to transfer control of Avalon to MIP for operations conducted under Geothermal Operating Permit ("GOP") 100 Sub 2.
20-11005	11/05/2020	Notice by RadiantIQ LLC of its intent to request numbering resources for various rate centers from the North American Numbering Plan Administrator.
20-11006	11/05/2020	Application of Lingo Telecom of the West, LLC to voluntarily discontinue telecommunication service conducted under Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity ("CPC") 2990 Sub 2.
20-11007	11/06/2020	Notice by Noble Solar LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the Sagittarius Solar Project consisting of a 400 MW photovoltaic solar electric generating facility, a 400 MW battery energy storage system, and associated facilities to be located in Nye and Clark Counties, Nevada.
20-11008	11/10/2020	Application of Beehive Telephone Co., Inc., Nevada, filed under Advice Letter No. 20-3, to revise Tariff No. 1 to reduce the Federal Lifeline discount for Lifeline customers pursuant to Federal Communications Commission Docket No. FCC 16-38.
20-11009	11/12/2020	Notice by Stagecoach Wind 1 LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the Stagecoach Wind Project consisting of a 400 MW wind energy generating facility, a 400 MW battery energy storage system, a 230 kV transmission line, and associated facilities to be located in White Pine County, Nevada.
20-11010	11/12/2020	Notice by Grass Valley Solar, LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the Grass Valley Solar Project consisting of a 300 MW photovoltaic solar electric generating facility, an up to 300 MW battery energy storage system, a 345 kV generation-tie line, and associated facilities to be located in Pershing County, Nevada.
20-11011	11/13/2020	Filing by Assurance Wireless USA, L.P. of updated Informational Tariff No. 1 that includes revisions to Lifeline Assistance Broadband Plan.
20-11012	11/13/2020	Notice by Boulevard Associates, LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the Mason Valley East Solar Energy Center Project consisting of a 400 MW photovoltaic solar electric generating facility, an up to 400 MW battery energy storage system, a 500 kV generation-tie line, and associated facilities to be located in Lyon County, Nevada.
20-11013	11/13/2020	Notice by Boulevard Associates, LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the Mason Valley North Solar Energy Center Project consisting of a 200 MW photovoltaic solar electric generating facility, an up to 200 MW battery energy storage system, a 500 kV generation-tie line, and associated facilities to be located in Lyon County, Nevada.
20-11014	11/13/2020	Nevada Power Company d/b/a NV Energy filed Notice No. 20-04 to adjust the Base Tariff Energy Rates and Deferred Energy Account Adjustment Rates effective January 1, 2021.
20-11015	11/13/2020	Sierra Pacific Power Company d/b/a NV Energy filed Notice No. 20-04(E) to adjust the Base Tariff Energy Rates and Deferred Energy Account Adjustment Rates effective January 1, 2021.
20-11016	11/13/2020	Sierra Pacific Power Company d/b/a NV Energy filed Notice No. 20-04(G) to adjust the Base Tariff Energy Rates and Deferred Energy Account Adjustment Rates effective January 1, 2021.
20-11017	11/13/2020	Notice by ExteNet Systems, Inc., ExteNet Asset Entity, LLC, Hudson Fiber Network Inc, JH Killington Communications, LLC, and Mount Royal Holdings, LLC of a transaction that will result in a transfer of control of telecommunication companies.
20-11018	11/24/2020	Application of CenturyLink Public Communications, Inc. d/b/a CenturyLink to voluntarily discontinue telecommunication service conducted under Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity ("CPC") 2333 Sub 4.
20-11019	11/23/2020	Joint Petition of Nevada Power Company d/b/a NV Energy and Sierra Pacific Power Company d/b/a NV Energy for approval of their updated Energy Storage Device Data and Metering Report pursuant to the Order issued in Docket No. 19-10002.
20-11020	11/23/2020	Joint Petition of Nevada Bell Telephone Company d/b/a AT&T Nevada and AT&T Wholesale and Airespring, Inc. for approval of Amendment No. 1 to their Interconnection Agreement pursuant to Section 252 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
20-11021	11/24/2020	Filing by Sierra Pacific Power Company d/b/a NV Energy of changes in rates within its Gas Tariff Schedule No. INGR pursuant to NAC 704.522 and NAC 704.526.
20-11022	11/4/2020	Investigation regarding transition to 10-digit dialing for the 775 area code resulting from the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") order designating 988 as the National Suicide Hotline.
20-11023	11/24/2020	Notice by White Pine Waterpower, LLC, under the provisions of the Utility Environmental Protection Act, of an application to a federal agency for approval to construct the White Pine Pumped Storage Hydro Project consisting of a 1000 MW closed-loop pumped hydroelectric energy storage facility, a 345 kV generation-tie line, and associated facilities to be located in White Pine County, Nevada.

Prior editions of PUCN Connection are available at puc.nv.gov/About/Media_Outreach/PUCN_Connection/.

For questions or comments about this newsletter, contact Consumer Outreach Director Dawn Rivard at drivard@puc.nv.gov or Communications Director Peter Kostas at pkostas@puc.nv.gov.