



# City of Whiteville

## Safety & Risk Management/Emergency Services

317 South Madison St  
Whiteville, NC 28472  
(910) 642-8046

Hal Lowder, Jr

### **PRESS RELEASE** For Immediate Release

#### **Whiteville Officials warn residents of Utility Scam and advise to “Hang up on Phone Scams”**

Imagine receiving a phone call from your utility company saying they’re about to cut off your water. The caller ID looks like it might be a legitimate phone number, but you know you’ve paid your bill. The caller says, “I can stop this, but only if you pay me.”

City of Whiteville is warning it’s customers to be aware of bill payment scams. A couple came by our offices claiming that someone from the City was trying to collect money from them on the phone, says Hal Lowder, Safety & Risk Management Officer. The couple knew they were not behind, so they came by City Hall, and it was determined that this was a phone scam. Even though these customers are not behind on their payments, the scammers warn that service will be shut off immediately unless the customer agrees to make an immediate payment by sending funds through a credit card, debit card or other means. Threats of immediate disconnection are generally a sign that customers have been contacted by a scam artist. Additionally, these Scammers can use computers to make it look like they’re calling from one place – when, in fact, they’re someplace else.

Lowder offers these tips to avoid falling victim to a utility scam:

- \* Never provide a Social Security Number, credit card number or banking information to anyone requesting it over the phone or in person unless you initiated the contact and feel confident with whom you are speaking.
- \* If you receive a call claiming to be your utility company and feel pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up the phone and call the customer service number on your utility bill.
- \* Always think safety first. Do not give in to high-pressure tactics over the phone.. Scammers can be reported to the Federal Trade Commission, online or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP.

For more information contact Hal Lowder, Safety & Risk Management Officer.

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