

## Ameren Illinois Seeing Spike in Scam Attempts

### *Scammers are demanding immediate payments*

**COLLINSVILLE, IL, (JUNE 20, 2018)** – Ameren Illinois is warning customers of an electric utility scam that is targeting customers across the state. Scam artists have been targeting businesses and some residents posing as Ameren Illinois representatives and threatening immediate disconnection of service if payment is not made within an hour.

Scam artists are urging that the payment be made via a pre-paid money card. More than 65 customers this week have already called the Ameren Illinois Customer Care Center to report the attempted scam.

“Scammers claim they will disconnect service within the hour if a payment isn’t made,” said Shirley Stennis, director of customer service for Ameren Illinois. “This is not a practice or policy of Ameren Illinois. In fact, we give our customers the opportunity to make payment arrangements and would never demand payment in this manner.”

In the last five years, more than 3,100 Ameren Illinois customers have reported being scammed or the victims of an attempted scam. The most common scheme involves a person who poses as an Ameren Illinois representative, calls a customer, and threatens to disconnect the customer’s electric service if the customer does not make an immediate payment (usually through a prepaid credit card).

Small businesses are frequent targets because they yield higher dollar amounts than individual residential accounts and business owners fear having their power shut off during busy times of the day. Scams have cost Ameren Illinois customers more than \$75,000 since 2013.

“This is a growing challenge that many utility companies throughout the country are experiencing,” said Ameren Illinois Chairman and President Richard J. Mark. “Scam artists have become increasingly sophisticated with their tactics. They can be very convincing.”

Mark said that Ameren Illinois is diligent in reminding its customers that the company will never demand payment over the phone or ask for a customer’s personal information.

Ameren Illinois shares the following warning signs of a scam attempt:

- **Threat to disconnect.** Scammers may aggressively tell the customer the utility bill is past due and service will be disconnected if a payment is not made – usually within less than an hour. Ameren Illinois sends disconnect notices through the mail and always attempts to work with the customer on a solution before shutting off power.
- **Requests for personal information,** such as social security numbers and bank accounts, as well as particulars about your Ameren Illinois bill. You should only share personal information in conversations you initiate.

- **Requests to pay with a prepaid card.** Scammers instruct the customer to make payment with a prepaid card, which are widely available at retail stores. When the customer calls back, the scammer asks the customer for the prepaid card's number, which grants the scammer instant access to the card's funds, and the victim's money
- **Suspicious phone numbers.** Scammers often call or ask to be called back at a number with a local area code, but not a number that belongs to Ameren Illinois.

"Anyone who suspects that they have been contacted by an imposter should hang up the phone or close the door and call us immediately at 800-755-5000," Stennis said. "We can't stress enough that our customers are the first and best line of defense in preventing these scams."

Customers are urged to visit [ameren.com/customer-service/stop-scammers](https://www.ameren.com/customer-service/stop-scammers) for guidance on avoiding scams. Customers can also follow Ameren Illinois on social media to receive the latest updates on fraudulent account activity.

#### **About Ameren Illinois**

Ameren Illinois delivers energy to 1.2 million electric and 816,000 natural gas customers throughout central and southern Illinois. Our service territory covers more than 1,200 communities and 43,700 square miles and our mission is to power the quality of life. For more information, visit [AmerenIllinois.com](https://www.AmerenIllinois.com). Follow us on Twitter @AmerenIllinois and [Facebook](#).