

Good Morning Business Watch and Neighborhood Watch,

There is a Duke Energy Scam that is Targeting Pinellas County Residents and there has been five victims contacted since Tuesday November 12th.

Detectives are encouraging the public to be on alert to a recent phone scam involving callers posing as Duke Energy employees.

According to detectives, residents receive a phone call from someone claiming to be an employee of Duke Energy. The scammers have 'spoofed' or programmed their call to read as Duke Energy on the victim's caller ID, appearing to make the scam call that much more believable.

The caller informs the citizen that they are past due on their electric bill and need to pay immediately to avoid having their electricity turned off.

Detectives say the caller instructs residents to go and purchase a gift card or a re-loadable debit card from a retail store. The caller provides a call back number and explains how the victim needs to call back and provide the card numbers from the card they purchased to satisfy the past due payment.

Detectives say, five residents of Pinellas County have been targeted by this scam since Veteran's Day.

Detectives encourage citizens to never make payment over the phone when they have received an incoming call and have not confirmed the call is legitimate. Citizens should never call the number back that is provided to them over the phone and should instead look up the correct phone number on their billing statement or online. Citizens can then confirm if they have a payment past due and make sure payment goes to the actual company.

As a reminder, most scam phone callers will ask for the citizen to obtain gift cards and call back with the gift card numbers.

If you feel you have been a victim of this scam or a similar one, please call the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Economic Crimes Unit at 582-6200.

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