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NEWSLETTER

Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative

May 2014

Beware of Con Artists Who Pose as Utility Employees

Electric utility customers are filing new complaints of being preyed upon by con artists with increasingly aggressive tactics that now raise public safety concerns. Neighboring utilities have made detailed reports of the complaints available, and though the scam appears to be operating nationwide, the crooks are hitting closer to home, in larger cities and in rural northwest Wisconsin.

There are new variants on the pattern of scammers pretending to be utility employees and threatening disconnection if a payment is not made immediately.

One variant is the phony story that the electric meter is defective and could explode or set the house on fire. Payment for replacing the meter is demanded, with the promise of a refund after the work is done. Another variant is the false claim that the customer's last payment was rejected by "the bank" and that immediate payment is the only alternative to immediate disconnection.

A new and more dangerous tactic being employed by scammers is to appear in person rather than attempt the con by telephone. In neighboring areas,

customers have reported people knocking on their doors, claiming to be local utility employees, and asking to be let inside the home to check or change their meter. Some customers have been cool-headed enough to refuse admittance and point out that the meter is located outside. In at least one case the victim let the scammers into his home and was lucky enough to lose only money.

A standard tactic is to refuse payment by check and insist the victims go to a retail store and purchase a VISA Green Dot card for the required amount, then call the scammer and give him the card number. At that point, the victim's money is gone.

A Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) employee may request access to your electrical load center to verify dual fuel or water heater wiring; however, we would not request or demand access regarding payment or disconnect. All CVEC employees carry photo identification. If you notice any activity that you deem suspicious, please call CVEC at 715-239-6800 to verify the identity of the employee(s) working in your area.

Under Wisconsin law, it's a Class I felony to impersonate a utility employee, whether or not any money changes hands. With the escalating aggressiveness of the scammers' tactics, an immediate 9-1-1 call is warranted if employee identification cannot be verified and the "employee" insists on having access to your home.

—Source: www.customersfirst.org



THANK YOU!

Operation Round Up would like to thank all members who contribute each month to this program. By rounding your electric bill up to the next dollar, your money has helped several families in our area receive assistance during challenging circumstances.



If you would like additional information or to enroll in Operation Round Up, please call our office at (715) 239-6800.



Spring Forward at Your Home

Prepare for summer heat, increase energy savings

After this long, long winter you may not even mind getting outside to do some work around your home!

Adding a few items to your list of spring chores (like sealing window leaks, pictured) can help make your home more energy efficient and lower your energy bills this summer.

Start with your air conditioning unit

Spring and early summer are good times to make sure that your air conditioning unit is ready to work when you flip the switch.

- Get help from a professional who can inspect and service your unit.
- Give your air conditioner a do-it-yourself cleaning. Shut the unit off, and clear away leaves and yard debris outside. Inside the unit, clean or replace filters that can restrict air flow and reduce overall efficiency by making the air conditioner work harder on hot summer days. Dust the fan blades if you can do so safely. Make sure air can flow freely

over the inside and outside coils. Vacuum registers to remove any dust buildup.

- Check weather stripping. When using window units, ensure that weather stripping is in place. Placement should be between the middle of the top window pane and the bottom pane.

Long-term savings tip

Installing high-performance windows will improve your home's energy performance. While it may take years for new windows to pay off in energy savings, the benefits of added comfort, improved aesthetics, and functionality can also offset the cost.

Visit TogetherWeSave.com to find out how little measures around the house can add up to big energy savings as temperatures outside climb.



—B. Denise Hawkins, NRECA

Is Your Central Air Conditioner on our Load Management Program?

Chippewa Valley Electric is offering a \$25 rebate to new participants in our Central Air Conditioning Load Management Program. In order to qualify for the rebate, the member must sign up for the control before June 1, 2014, and the member's air conditioner *cannot* be connected to a dual fuel meter.



In addition to the \$25 rebate, the member will receive a \$6 per month credit during June, July, and August. Central air conditioning has a special control strategy that cycles only the compressor, rather than shutting down the entire system for extended periods. When we need to control central air conditioning systems, the compressor is cycled in 15-minute increments during the control period. The blower is not interrupted, as there is generally enough residual cold in the ductwork for the control to go unnoticed.

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