



600 South Fourth Street  
P.O. Box 383  
Stoughton, WI 53589-0383

*Serving Electric, Water & Wastewater Since 1886*

# News Release

## Stoughton Utilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 23, 2013

Contact: Brian Hoops, Utilities Office & Information Systems Supervisor

### **Utility Scams Catch Customers Off Guard**

Stoughton Utilities warns customers to be wary of callers or visitors who claim to be from the utility requesting immediate payment for a bill or meter.

In one instance nearby in Madison, Wisconsin, a caller told a small business owner that he had to pay a \$499 deposit that was past due for a new meter – or have his electricity shut off. What's more, the caller asked that the business owner buy a prepaid debit card to make the payment.

In another instance, also in Madison, two men visited a homeowner and knocked on his door, threatening to disconnect the water if the customer did not immediately pay \$250 in cash for a new water meter.

In other instances, scammers target residential customers, claiming that the household is behind on its electricity bill and needs to pay up now, or that a meter is malfunctioning and could put people at risk.

These scams take advantage of business owners by calling them at busy times, and homeowners by pressuring and intimidating them. "These scammers prey upon people's fears," said Stoughton Utilities Director Robert Kardasz. "They can also seem legitimate in many ways. For

example, they can program a Caller ID so that the call appears to originate from the utility's area code, or they can apply lettering to their vehicle to make it appear official.”

Stoughton Utilities reminds customers:

- The utility will not demand immediate payment over the phone. Customers will always receive a disconnection notice by postal mail at least five to ten days before any disconnection action is taken. Any phone calls made by utility staff will be 24-hours prior to any scheduled disconnection.
- Customers need not provide personal financial information over the phone or in-person at your home – such as a checking or credit card account number – to enroll in any kind of program or pay off a balance. Customers always have the option to pay online or to come to our office to pay in-person.
- The utility will never request your social security or driver's license number over the phone when we call you.
- The utility does not ask that customers make payments to purchase or repair electric or water meters.
- Utility staff are not allowed to request or accept any type of payment when visiting your home or business. All cash payments must be made at our office. Utility employees will never require a certain type of payment, and will absolutely never require you to purchase a prepaid debit card.
- When performing disconnections, utility staff will always travel in a vehicle marked with the black and blue SU logo on the door.

Stoughton Utilities recommends that if you are ever in doubt of a call that you receive, hang up and call SU customer service at (608) 873-3379 to verify. If anyone claiming to be a Stoughton Utilities employee visits your home or business, request to see their utility ID badge, which will contain their name, photo, and the SU logo, and if it appears questionable, contact the SU customer service to verify its authenticity.

###

Founded in 1886, Stoughton Utilities serves electric customers in Stoughton and the surrounding area; and wastewater and water customers in Stoughton.