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UPCO news

MANAGER'S *Message*

BY KEN SIMMONS, PRESIDENT/CEO



Energy scams unmasked

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Upon EMC wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share updates on some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

Recent utility scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves—either physically or digitally—as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for

scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage—and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is—it's likely a scam aimed at stealing your personal information.

Spotting a scam

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam.

Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

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SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



Unlock comfort *and* savings

By Abby Berry

If you're working on your summer to-dos, consider adding home weatherization to your list.

We typically think about weatherizing our homes during winter months when we're standing next to a chilly window or a drafty exterior door. But weatherizing your home provides comfort and energy savings year-round, especially during summer months when your air conditioner is working overtime.

According to energystar.gov, a home with insufficient insulation and air leaks wastes more than 20% of the energy used to heat or cool the home—that's essentially throwing money out the door. Fortunately, most weatherization projects are easy to do yourself and can be completed in a day.

The simplest and most cost-effective weatherization strategies include air-sealing around windows and exterior doors.

If you have older windows, odds are you have air escaping through tiny cracks and gaps around the frame. Do a quick visual inspection. If you can see any daylight around

the frame or the windows rattle easily, you will likely have air leaks. Also check for any small cracks around the frame that may not be visible with sunlight.

If you suspect you have leaky windows and plan to apply new caulk, be sure to remove the old caulk and clean the area well before application. Caulking materials vary in strength and properties, but you'll likely need a half-cartridge per window.

Silicone caulk is a popular choice and can also be used to seal joints between bathroom and kitchen fixtures. If you have any leftover caulk, use it to seal those areas.

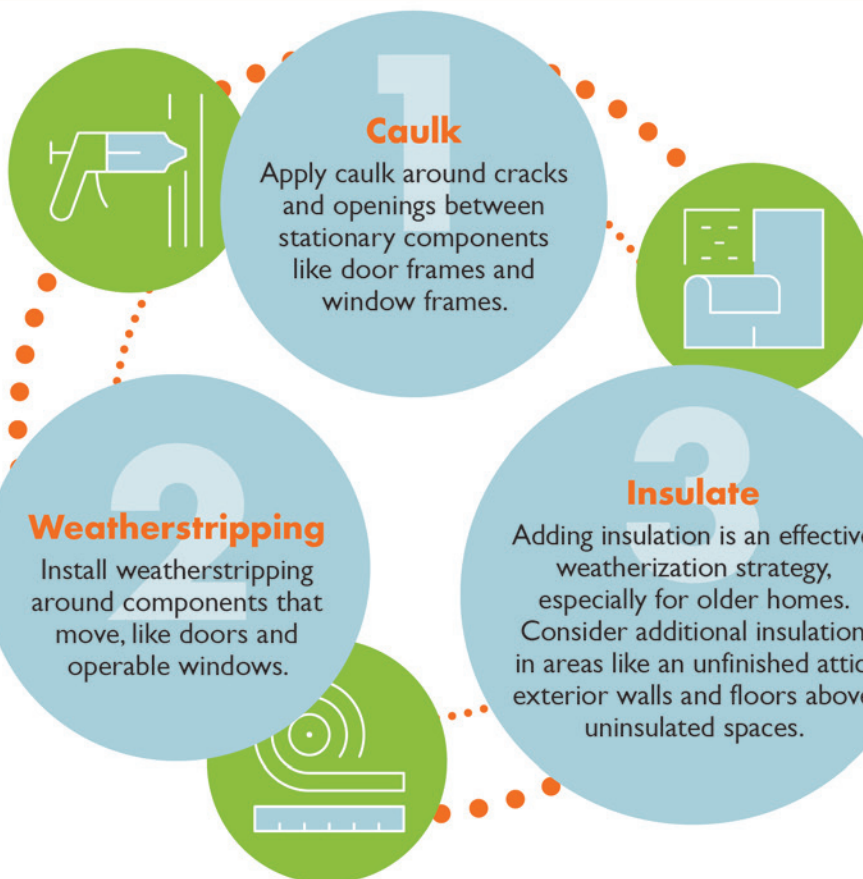
Another effective but simple weatherization project is installing weatherstripping around exterior doors. The most common types of weatherstripping options are V-channel, felt and foam tape. To choose the best type for your home, con-



Abby Berry

3 WAYS TO SEAL IN COMFORT

In addition to increased comfort, weatherizing your home is an excellent way to save energy and lower your cooling and heating costs. Here are three ways you can seal in comfort *and* savings.



sider temperature fluctuations and weather exposure. Most homeowners opt for felt or foam tape; both options are easy to install but will need to be replaced every couple of years, depending on wear and tear. Weatherstripping should be installed around the top and sides of the door.

If you see daylight around the bottom of an exterior door, consider installing a door sweep in addition to weatherstripping. Door sweeps are available in aluminum, plastic, vinyl and felt options.

Weatherstripping can also be installed around windows, typically to the sides of a double hung or sliding window, or around the window sash.

If you're unsure how to install weatherstripping or apply caulk, check out trusted websites like *energy.gov* for step-by-step instructions and video tutorials.

Another way to improve comfort in your home is adding insulation. While this is a more costly project and requires a professional's help, it's an effective way to decrease heat flow,



which impacts energy use in winter and summer months. Older homes may need additional insulation to either replace older materials or meet newer efficiency standards. Contact a qualified installation specialist if you suspect your home's insulation levels are inadequate.

In addition to saving energy, air sealing can help you avoid moisture control issues, improve indoor air quality and extend the life of your heating and cooling system. Weatherize your home to unlock year-round comfort and savings on monthly energy costs.

Abby Berry writes about consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Energy scams unmasked, *Continued from page 20A*

What Upson EMC will (and won't) Do

Upson EMC will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

Upson EMC will never ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options: in-person, night deposit, bank draft, on our website at www.upsonemc.com or local banks, including West Central Georgia Bank or First Bank of Pike.

Avoiding scams

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be an Upson EMC employee requesting banking or other personal information.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at (706) 647-5475 so we can assist. Upson EMC wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.

Annual Meeting

set for Tuesday, October 22, 11 a.m.

SAVE THE DATE



ARTICLE III, SECTION 3.3 Nominations and election of Directors.

- (a). It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than one hundred twenty (120) days before the date of the meeting of the members at which directors are to be elected, a committee to represent the geographical areas served by the cooperative. No officer or member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed as a member of such committee. A member of the Nominating Committee may not be a member of the Credentials and Elections Committee, a close relative (as defined herein) of a director, officer, employee, or known director candidate. The committee shall prepare and post at the principal office of the cooperative at least thirty (30) days before the meeting a list of nominations for director by district and post.
- (b). In addition to nominations of the Nominating Committee, 150 or more of the members of the cooperative may make other nominations in writing over their personal signatures not less than ninety (90) days prior to the meeting, and the secretary shall post the same at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Nominating Petition shall:
- (1). List on each page of the Nominating Petition the name of the member to be nominated (a Nominating Petition may list only one proposed nominee);
 - (2). Indicate on each page of the Nominating Petition the director position by district (and post, if applicable) for which the member so nominated will run; and
 - (3). Contain the printed names, addresses, telephone numbers and original dated signatures signed within sixty (60) days of the first signature.
- (c). The nomination for directors by petition or otherwise shall be closed ninety (90) days prior to the meeting. The secretary shall provide with the notice of the meeting a statement of the number of directors to be elected. Notwithstanding anything in this section contained, failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any election of directors.
- (d). At the Member Meeting, no nominations may be made from the floor except that such nominations may be made and shall be allowed for any director position whose term of office is to expire at that Member Meeting and for which there would not otherwise be any eligible nominee. If nominations are taken from the floor, the election shall take place at that Member Meeting.
- (e). Directors shall be elected from the nominees by majority vote of the members present and voting by written ballot.

Claim undeliverable capital credits by October 1 deadline

In compliance with O.C.G.A. § 44-12-236 of the Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act, Upson EMC is attempting to locate former members whose capital credits checks were issued but have been returned by the U.S. Postal Service as “undeliverable” or have otherwise been unclaimed.

A current list of these members and instructions for claiming these funds is posted on Upson EMC’s

website at www.upsonemc.com and at the corporate office located at 607 East Main Street, Thomaston, Georgia 30286, for review from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The last possible date to claim these funds is October 1, 2024. If these funds are not claimed by this date, they will be donated for charitable uses, as permitted by O.C.G.A. § 44-12-236.

