



City of Parma, Ohio

LAW DEPARTMENT



7335 RIDGE ROAD

PARMA, OHIO 44129-5593

440-885-8132

Timothy G. Dobeck

Law Director

Prosecutor

September 2, 2020

LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY

FRAUD ALERT – ILLUMINATING COMPANY

Parma residents are once again at risk of becoming victims of a scam. An official for the city of Parma noted that he received a phone call from scammers posing as the Illuminating Company. The scammers inform victims that they were late on payments and their services will be shut down if they do not immediately pay an outrageously high bill.

The Parma Law Director's office urges Parma residents to be aware of these potential threats and to report any suspicious behavior. You should **never** provide or confirm sensitive information over the phone. If you are being pressured to make a payment immediately, hang up the phone, as it is most likely a fraudulent service.

Be vigilant when answering calls from purported utility companies or other strangers. Scammers are opportunists who prey on people and look for any personal identifying information such as your name, date of birth and social security number that they can later use to defraud their victim.

Below are a few tips to protect yourself from and avoid utility call scams:

- **Spot the scam:** The overarching sign of this scam is pressure. The scammer posing as a representative of the Illuminating Company or some other public utility will inform you that your services will be shut down within minutes if you fail or decline to pay them immediately. Utility companies will usually first issue a turn-off notice in the mail. They also allow a minimum of several days, but often weeks to make a payment before services will be shut down. A utility company will **not** give you mere minutes to make a payment before shutting down your services.
- **Verify:** First, demand from the caller a callback number and his/her name. Then, hang up the telephone immediately. Do not call the number they give you. Instead, contact your utility company directly to verify the status of your account.

- **Report:** If you believe that you have been contacted by a scammer, contact the Parma Police Department at 440-885-1234 to file a report on the suspected scam. Be sure to provide the police with any name and telephone number that the scammer may have given you. In addition, victims should also report scams to the Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs at 216-443-7226. Victims may also report scams to the Ohio Attorney General's office by:

Visiting online	www.OhioProtects.org (victims may remain anonymous)
Call	800-282-0515 (open Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.)
Mail	30 E. Broad St., 14th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215