



City of Parma, Ohio

LAW DEPARTMENT



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LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY **FRAUD ALERT – ELECTRICITY COMPANY**

People across Northeast Ohio have reported being the target of an electricity company scam. An individual recently approached a Parma resident's private home, introducing himself as a representative of the NOPEC natural gas and electricity utility company. Claiming that the City of Parma had switched to NOPEC, this individual requested sensitive billing information from the resident. The scammer later claimed to be employed by a competing utility company, though it is unclear how truthful that identification was.

The claims made by such individuals are fraudulent scams meant to gain access to your personal financial information. These individuals prey on your trusting nature, and want you to think that they represent companies they do not. It is all fraud, meant to get eyes on your information through unauthorized and impermissible solicitations. In reality, any alterations that the City makes to your utilities will come through formalized mail or email, with changes that you can track through a secure website. You will **not** be notified about important changes in your account by an individual pressuring and coercing you at your front-door.

Parma Law Director Tim Dobeck urges Parma residents to be aware of these potential threats and to report any suspicious behavior. You should **never** provide or confirm sensitive information to anyone at your door or over the phone. If you are being pressured to do so, either ask the intruder to leave or hang up, as it is most likely a scam.

Below are a few tips to protect yourself from and avoid any potential scams:

- **SPOT THE SCAM:** The overarching components of this scam are authority and trust. The scammer, posing as a representative of some public utility company, will request to see your sensitive financial information. In the event of a citywide utility company transfer, the city will send out notices weeks in advance before the transition is complete. A utility company will **not** approach you in person and ask to view your bill.

- **VERIFY:** First, demand that the representative provide a name and callback number/contact information. Do not call the number they gave you. Instead, contact your utility company directly to verify the status of the company. A utility company representative will **not** pressure you to reveal such information immediately. A utility company will allow you time to review your bills and financial statements regarding any alleged disputes, and get back to them at a later date. This allows you to check your email, review their website, and get into contact with your utility provider to see if any of these changes are legitimate. If the individual on the phone or at your door is impatient and does not give you this time, consider the possibility that they are not a legitimate employee and do not have your best interests in mind.

- **REPORT:** If you believe you have been contacted by a scammer, contact the Parma Police Department at 400.885.1234 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 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