



## NEWS RELEASE

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## Xcel Energy cautions customers about scam activity

**EAU CLAIRE, Wis.** (Feb. 10, 2017) – While scams targeting Xcel Energy customers come and go depending on the season, a recent increase in activity has the company again cautioning customers to protect themselves from this nationwide threat.

Recent scamming incidents have occurred in Hudson, La Crosse and Eau Claire. Residents and businesses in other parts of Xcel Energy's Wisconsin service area have been targeted in the past.

The scams typically involve attempts to illegally obtain payments for fictitious utility bills. Individuals impersonating Xcel Energy employees or collection agency personnel are using a variety of techniques to access customers' funds. They have been known to:

- Tell intended victims their account is past due and threaten to turn off their power if they do not make a payment right away.
- Require victims to pay using a pre-paid debit card.
- Manipulate caller ID to make it look like they are calling from Xcel Energy.

Scammers have targeted all classes of customers, but particularly small businesses such as salons, restaurants and automotive repair shops. In most cases a scammer calls during busy hours of operation and threatens to disconnect the customer's power unless they make a payment over the phone.

Here are a few tips and information to avoid being scammed:

- Never give out personal information, credit card numbers or wire money as a result of an unexpected or unsolicited call if you cannot validate the caller's authenticity.
- Xcel Energy provides many options for payment; be suspicious if the caller is requiring the use of a prepaid debit card.
- Be aware that Xcel Energy will contact customers first by U.S. mail about past due bills – not over the phone. You will be sent a disconnection notice in writing before your power is actually turned off.

If you have any doubt about the authenticity of someone claiming to be with Xcel Energy and asking for payment, the company recommends that you hang up and call Xcel Energy Customer Service anytime at **1-800-895-4999** or the Business Solutions Center at **1-800-481-4700** (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

In addition, Xcel Energy recommends that if a customer has given credit card information over the phone to someone posing as an Xcel Energy employee, the customer should call his or her credit card company and follow the credit card company's recommendations.

For more information, visit [connect.xcelenergy.com/scams](http://connect.xcelenergy.com/scams).

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