

Scammers Targeting Tucson Businesses with Claims of Unsigned Checks to TEP

TUCSON, Ariz., May 14, 2010 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Tucson Electric Power (TEP) is warning its customers to remain wary of callers who have been pretending to represent the company in fraudulent efforts to elicit credit card information.

Eighteen local businesses have reported receiving telephone calls recently from someone claiming to represent TEP. The caller told them they'd forgotten to sign the check mailed in with a recent bill and asked them to provide their credit card information for payment to avoid having their electric service disconnected, the customers reported.

The scam originally surfaced last month, prompting the company to send out an April 9 press release warning of the tactic. After several weeks passed without further reports, business customers began calling TEP last week to report receiving similar calls.

"TEP would not call and threaten to disconnect anyone's power because they left a signature off a check, and we don't ask for credit card information under those circumstances," said Steve Lynn, Vice President and Chief Customer Officer for TEP. "While we don't know if these are the same callers from last month, they're engaged in a similar effort to defraud our customers."

If customers mail in checks without a signature, a TEP representative will call to ask if they would prefer the check shredded or returned to them via the U.S. Mail. Customers can then make payment with a new check, online or through other payment methods without any concern about immediate disconnection.

Lynn said the callers appear to be simply contacting local businesses at random, not based on any records maintained by TEP. Customers can always contact TEP's Customer Care Center at 623-7711 if they have questions about their account.

"If you receive a call from someone claiming to represent TEP who asks for your credit card information because you left a signature off a check, hang up and report the call to the police," Lynn said.

Tucson Electric Power, a subsidiary of UniSource Energy Corporation (NYSE: UNS), provides safe, reliable power to more than 400,000 customers in southern Arizona. For more information, visit tep.com. For more information about UniSource Energy, visit uns.com.

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