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## NEWS RELEASE

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# Hawai'i utilities join forces against aggressive scammers, alert customers during Utility Scam Awareness Week

**HONOLULU, Nov. 14, 2018** – Hawai'i residents and small businesses are losing thousands of dollars to increasingly aggressive thieves and scam artists posing as utility workers and bill collectors. As part of national Utility Scam Awareness Week, local utilities, police and consumer experts are joining forces to prevent customers from being scammed.

The Hawaiian Electric Companies, Hawaiian Telcom, Hawai'i Gas, Board of Water Supply and Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative have partnered with the state Office of Consumer Protection and Honolulu Police Department to combat scammers who target utility customers. Customers need to be alert and recognize scams, especially when criminals threaten to disconnect service unless a payment is made.

“Unfortunately, scammers are always looking for potential victims, and the utility scam is one of the common ruses,” said Honolulu Police Deputy Chief John McCarthy. “Whenever you receive a phone call or email or letter that sounds suspicious or out of the ordinary, always check with the organization or business before making any payment or giving out personal financial information. You don’t want criminals to get your hard earned money.”

Scammers are targeting customers who rely on vital services such as electricity, water, gas and telecommunications. And utilities often see a spike in scams during the holidays.

The utilities offer the following tips:

- If the caller says your utility account is delinquent and threatens to shut off service immediately unless payment is made, it’s a scam.
- If someone calls from a utility demanding immediate payment over the phone, via money transfer, prepaid debit cards or by Bitcoin, it’s a scam.
- If the caller asks to meet the customer in person to pick up a payment, it’s a scam.
- If you receive an email from your utility urging you to click on an embedded link or attachment to resolve a utility issue or pay a bill, think before you click. It’s likely a scam.
- If a utility worker shows up at your home or place of business, ensure that person is wearing official attire with a logo, driving a properly labeled vehicle and carrying company identification. When in doubt, call the utility’s customer service center.

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