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a conEdison, inc. company

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ORANGE AND ROCKLAND UTILITIES: NEW LAW TO GUARD AGAINST GIFT CARD SCAMS

Businesses are Required to Post a Warning About Potential Gift Card Fraud

PEARL RIVER, NY, July 12, 2023, 6:30 am – Orange and Rockland Utilities today advised its customers that New York State has adopted a new consumer protection law designed to help shield NYS consumers from potential gift card scams.

The new law requires all businesses selling gift cards to display a notice at or near where any gift cards or gift certificates are displayed or sold to alert consumers about gift card fraud.

Requesting gift cards as payment has become increasingly popular with thieves as funds are nearly impossible to trace. According to the Federal Trade Commission in 2022, nearly 65,000 consumers filed a complaint related to gift card scams, equating to a total loss of \$228.3 million.

With the number of gift card scams on the rise, it's more important than ever to educate consumers so they know that **gift cards should only be used for gifts, not to make payments**. This new law requiring warning signage where gift cards are displayed or sold will help to reduce the success rate of these thieves and protect consumers' hard-earned money.

The typical scam scheme goes this way: Thieves posing as O&R employees call unsuspecting customers and threaten them with the immediate shut off of their electric service if they don't pay phony O&R bills with Green Dot or other prepaid debit cards.

Here are two big reasons not to believe any thief who makes a shutoff threat:

- **NO DEBIT CARDS** - O&R does not accept bill payment for electric and gas utility bills by Green Dot or any other prepaid debit cards. Never has.
- **NO IMMEDIATE SHUTOFF** - Disconnecting O&R electric or gas service for non-payment of bills involves a multi-step process – including written communications from O&R to the customer over a period of several days, or even weeks – not hours. That process is regulated by the NYS Public Service Commission and NJ Board of Public Utilities.

So, if someone calls you, says they are an O&R employee and threatens to shut off your electric or gas service that day if not immediately paid through a prepaid debit card, remember these tips:

- **Hang Up** – Disengage so you’re not further subjected to the thief’s high-pressure “sales pitch.”
- **Text Scam** – After you hang up on them, the more aggressive thieves will try to repeat their shutoff threat by texting you. Ignore the threat. They are thieves.
- **Don’t Hit “REDIAL”** – The caller ID screen on your phone for the thief’s call may read “Orange and Rockland Utilities,” but that’s a hi-tech bogus copy of the utility company’s number. That’s not O&R. Do not redial, and don’t call the number that the caller gives you to call them back. That will reconnect you to the thief.
- **Fast Track** - If you are unsure about whether you have an overdue balance on your O&R bill, the fastest way to find out is to log onto your account through oru.com/myaccount to review your latest account information. You also can call O&R’s automated phone system at 1-877-434-4100. Have your Orange and Rockland account number ready and follow the automated phone prompts to check your balance.
- **Check the I.D.** - If you are contacted by someone in-person or on the phone who says they represent O&R and you wish to verify their identity either ask for their photo ID card, if they are at the door, or get a call-back number if they are on the phone, and call O&R at: **this new number** 1-833-460-7059 during business hours Monday – Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. or 1-877-434-4100 O&R’s Customer Service Department off hours to verify their identity and the nature of their business with you. O&R employees and vendors are trained to cooperate with this request and are instructed to comply with a customer identity verification request.

Remember, if you are feeling threatened or otherwise uncomfortable about your security during the exchange, immediately report the incident to your local police department at 911.

About O&R

Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. (O&R) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Consolidated Edison, Inc., one of the nation’s largest investor-owned energy companies. O&R is a regulated utility that provides electric service to approximately 300,000 customers in southeastern New York State (where its franchise name is Orange & Rockland) and northern New Jersey (where it’s Rockland Electric Company), and natural gas service to approximately 130,000 customers in New York.

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