



District Attorney's Office ▪ 18th Judicial District

George H. Brauchler, District Attorney ▪ Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert & Lincoln Counties

Consumer Alert

Utility Company Phone Imposters are Scamming Area Businesses

The Aurora Police Department is reporting a rash of telephone scams that are targeting minority-owned businesses by suspects pretending to be from Xcel Energy. These imposters are threatening to immediately turn off utility services, claiming that the business has not paid their bill. In order to continue service, the merchant must send money right away using a pre-paid Green Dot or Money Pak card. Once the card is purchased, the victim is instructed to call the imposter back with the pin number so that the thief can access the money that has been loaded on the card. These extortionists are highly skilled at frightening merchants into acting quickly before they can verify that their account is in fact, overdue. Phone numbers that have been identified with this scam are as follows, although perpetrators of such schemes are known to change numbers frequently: **303-351-3679, 303-351-4559, 720-881-1696 & 866-249-2262.**

Protections consumers can take:

- Be suspicious of unexpected callers who make such threats. Legitimate businesses do not extort money from customers. If there's a valid concern regarding a customer's account, companies such as Xcel Energy will send a series of written notices to the customer first, before they call. If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from Xcel Energy, immediately hang-up and call the company back at **1-800-894-4999**. For suspicious calls from other companies, call the customer service number on a recent invoice and ask them to verify the status of your account.
- Never respond to anyone who demands that money be sent using a Green Dot or MoneyPak card. These cards are increasingly becoming the preferred method used by thieves because the money cannot be traced. Green Dot cards operate like a debit card but are not affiliated with any bank. Like a gift card, money can be loaded onto the card at the point of purchase, i.e., the store, and then reloaded once the recipient receives the permanent card in the mail. Meanwhile, the thief who acquires the pin number has full access to the permanent card.

Although these scare tactic scams have been around for a long time, the use of Green Dot cards to perpetrate fraud is relatively new - as Aurora police coin it, a ***new twist on an old scam!***

DA – 18th Consumer Protection Line: 720-874-8547