

# SWRE POWER SOURCE

*A Supplement to Oklahoma Living*

## ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.



Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

SWRE wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or leak of your personal information. This month, we're sharing updates on some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

### RECENT UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers typically disguise themselves—either physically or digitally—as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage—and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is—it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

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# NEW EPA POWER PLANT RULES THREATEN GRID RELIABILITY

*By the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*



On April 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released four major new regulations for the electric industry, including a much-anticipated rule to cut emissions from power plants, a sweeping move that will aggravate reliability concerns for electric cooperatives and other utilities nationwide.

“The path outlined by the EPA is unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable,” said Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. “It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid.”

The power plant rule constrains existing coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology that is not yet reliable or commercially available.

“The new EPA rules ignore our nation’s ongoing electric reliability challenges and are the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation’s energy future,” Matheson said.

The power plant rule will force the early closure of electricity generation sources that are available 24/7 and will also impede the construction of new natural gas plants. The timing of these sweeping new rules is particularly troubling as electric utilities face a surge in demand for electricity from factors like transportation electrification and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce and cryptocurrency.

Under the new rule, existing coal-fired power plants that plan to operate past the start of 2039 must install CCS to capture 90% of emissions by 2032. The rule also requires new natural gas plants that operate more than 40% of the time to install CCS and capture 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. These standards, and their reliance on unproven CCS technology, will undermine electric reliability.

Electric cooperatives understand the need to keep the lights on at a cost local families and businesses can afford. Clean energy technologies must be balanced with generation sources that are always available to ensure a reliable electric grid.

Electric cooperatives like SWRE deliver power to 42 million Americans. Our top priority is to meet our members’ energy needs, and we must have reliable electricity available to do that.

# ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Did you know ceiling fans can help you save energy? Ceiling fans create a windchill effect on your skin to make you feel a few degrees cooler. Raise the thermostat a few degrees and turn on fans to reduce air conditioning costs.

Set fan blades to rotate counterclockwise during summer months and clockwise during winter months. Remember, ceiling fans cool people but don't actually lower the indoor temperature. Turn them off when you leave the room.

Source: energy.gov



## SPOTTING A SCAM

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam. Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

## WHAT SWRE WILL (AND WON'T) DO

SWRE will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

SWRE will never ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, the SmartHub mobile app and web portal at SWRE.com, scheduled autodraft payments, and a 24/7 phone payment portal (1-833-890-9510).

## AVOIDING SCAMS

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be an SWRE employee requesting banking or other personal information. We will only send you text messages if you have opted in for important alerts through your SmartHub account.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at **1-800-256-7973** so we can assist. SWRE wants to help protect you and our community against utility fraud, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.





# SUMMER BILL SAVINGS

## BEAT THE PEAK FROM 3 P.M. - 7 P.M.

Consider using electricity off peak hours to not only save on your summer electric bill now, but to help us keep electric rates affordable for years to come. During the summer months, energy demand is the highest across the distribution system from 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. (the peak hour window).

This is typically the time of day that members are coming home from work, making dinner, bumping down the AC, etc. From 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. also happens to be the hottest time of the day when AC systems are working extra hard to make up the difference between the inside temperature of your home and the temperature outside. We call the spike in electricity use during this time a “peak.”

To beat the peak, set large appliances (oven, dishwasher, washer and dryer) to run before or after the peak window. Switch to a crockpot, air fryer or grill for cooking. Lastly, set your thermostat higher than you’re used to and utilize ceiling fans and drapes to stay cool.

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## SAVE THE DATE: 87<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

**AUGUST 12, 2024**

### Southwest Rural Electric

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### Bill Pay Options:

24/7 Bill Pay: 1-833-890-9510

SmartHub App or SWRE.com

### Outage Reports:

24/7 Hotline: 1-833-590-0353

SmartHub App

SWRE is an equal opportunity provider and employer. SWRE *Power Source* is published monthly for distribution to members of SWRE and is produced by Rebecca Chambless.



# WE'RE PROUD TO POWER YOU.