

Utility Scam Warning



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

Recently, some fast-talking scam artists have persuaded some folks, including members of electric cooperatives, to divulge their personal identification, including Social Security and bank account numbers. How did they do that? They promised something for nothing.

The con artists have been approaching utility customers, whether online, on the phone or in person, claiming to represent a government program that will help them pay their utility bills. They tell the customers that their bills will be paid with stimulus money, and all they have to do is hand over personal identifying information.

However, no such government program exists.

If someone approaches you with an offer that might seem too good to be true, you should be extra cautious. This is especially true if they tell you that in order to cash in on the fantastic offer, they just need to “verify” your bank account, credit card or Social Security number. The co-op members who share that information are at risk for identity theft and the financial damage that can result. They also could have their electricity shut off when the bill isn’t paid by the bogus program.

Remember, no one connected with Karnes Electric Cooperative would ever call you seeking this kind of information.

The Better Business Bureau offers some tips to help avoid being scammed:

Beware of Giving Personal Information Over the Phone. Never provide your Social Security number, credit card number or banking information to anyone requesting it over the phone (or at your home) unless you initiated the contact and feel confident in the person with whom you are speaking.

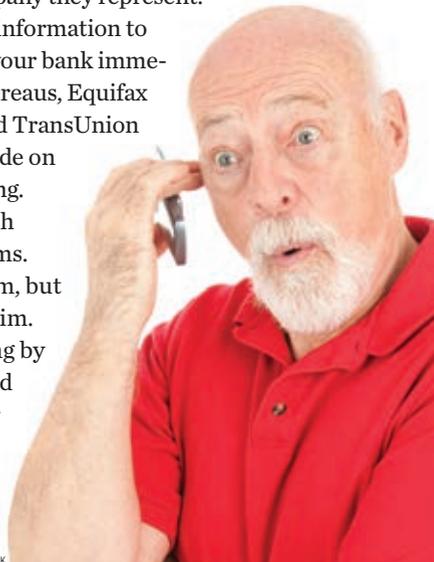
Do Your Research. If you receive a call from someone claiming to be with your utility company and feel pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up the phone and call the customer service number on your utility bill.

Beware of the Door-to-Door Sales Approach. Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, gas lines or appliances unless you have scheduled an appointment or reported a problem. Don’t give them any personal information until you have confirmed their identity by calling the company they represent.

Be Proactive. If you have already provided information to someone claiming to offer this service, contact your bank immediately. Also contact the three national credit bureaus, Equifax (1-800-685-1111), Experian (1-888-397-3742) and TransUnion (1-800-916-8800), and have a fraud notation made on your account so it doesn’t affect your credit rating.

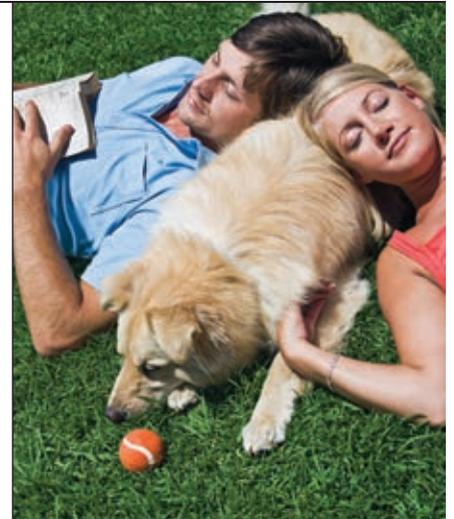
Inform Others. Share this information with friends and family so they do not become victims. Elderly victims are common in this type of scam, but anyone who pays a utility bill is a potential victim.

There are people out there who make a living by preying on our trust and good intentions. Guard your personal information like you would your wallet, and don’t be taken in by the promise of easy money.



ISTOCKPHOTO | THINKSTOCK

Beware: If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



BRAND X PICTURES

Happy

LABOR DAY!

The offices of Karnes Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, September 3, for Labor Day.

We wish you a happy and restful holiday.

POWER TIP

Save ENERGY • Save MONEY



All of these lightbulbs meet the new energy standards that take effect in the next two years.

The new energy-saving incandescent bulbs use 25 percent less energy than their traditional counterparts. Switch to CFLs and LEDs to save even more—they use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs.

For high-quality products with the greatest energy savings, choose bulbs that have earned the Energy Star rating.

Learn more at energysavers.gov.



Olga Serna, second from right, is joined by her family at her retirement party.

Olga Serna Retires

On July 30, Olga Serna was honored with a retirement luncheon celebrating her more than 46 years of service to Karnes Electric Cooperative.

Serna began working for KEC on February 21, 1966, as a general office clerk. She later advanced to assistant billing clerk and then billing clerk. In 1982 she was promoted to billing supervisor and remained in that capacity until her retirement.

On the local level, she represented the cooperative at the Karnes City Chamber of Commerce. She has been a strong community supporter through her years as an election official during local, state and national elections. She is also very active in her church, where she is an organist.

Serna and her husband, Victor, have been married for 46 years and have two children and five grandchildren. Her retirement plans include having time to relax and enjoy life with her family, traveling, continuing to serve as a director for the Karnes City Chamber of Commerce and the Karnes County Economic Development Committee, and continued birthday lunches with the Golden Girls.

As Serna reflected on the past, she wanted to remind everyone to have patience, endurance and perseverance.

Always try to be cheerful and have a pleasant smile for your co-workers; even on days you don't feel too cheery. The two things she will miss the most are company Christmas parties and birthday celebrations.

On behalf of the KEC Board of Directors and employees, we all want to wish Serna and her family many years of continued health and happiness.



Karnes Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 7, Karnes City, TX 78118

GENERAL MANAGER

Leroy T. Skloss

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COOPERATIVE OFFICES

Main Office

1007 N. Highway 123, Karnes City

District Office

1824 W. Goodwin, Pleasanton

Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at karnesec.org.



CONTACT US

For information and outages during office hours

(830) 780-3952 Karnes City

(830) 569-5538 Pleasanton

1-888-807-3952 toll-free

To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

(830) 780-3952

Coy City, Ecleto, Floresville, Gillette, Goliad, Karnes City, Kenedy, Runge, Three Rivers, Tilden and surrounding areas

(830) 569-5538

Charlotte, Christine, Pleasanton, Poteet, Verdi and surrounding areas

FIND US ON THE WEB

karnesec.org



SCHOOL SAFETY ABCs

The school buses are rolling, and excited children are on their way to and from classes. It's time to start thinking about back-to-school safety!

Walking:

- Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street.
- Take directions from crossing guards.
- Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it's OK to do so.

Riding the School Bus:

- Wait for the bus in a safe place, away from traffic and the street.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals that it's safe to enter.
- When getting dropped off, exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from it. Be aware of the street traffic in the area.

Riding a Bike:

- Mind traffic signals and the crossing guard.
- Always wear a bike helmet.
- Walk the bike through intersections.
- Ride with a buddy.
- Wear light-colored or reflective clothing.

Short Circuits

Old wiring could be hazardous

Residential electrical wiring changed during the 20th century as new appliances appeared on the scene and electricity evolved from a luxury to a mainstay. More appliances at home led to safety improvements and an increased number of room outlets, leaving older home wiring to play catch-up.

Because a third of American homes were built more than 50 years ago, home buyers and folks living in older homes should be aware of how wiring changed during the last century.



Look familiar? If your home is host to electrical wiring like this, it's time to call an electrician and make some improvements.

The wood frame above plaster ceilings could also become charred by lightbulbs that are too close to the ceiling or higher in wattage than the light fixture's rating.

To avoid such hazards, consumers should understand the limits of home wiring systems. Often, this depends on when a home was built or if the electrical system was upgraded. In other cases, though, telltale signs may indicate a problem.

Anytime you receive a shock from an electrical appliance, outlet or wall switch in your home, it's a warning that you should talk with a qualified electrician. If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips right after you replace or reset it, you have trouble somewhere. Flickering or dimming lights could mean loose connections, overloaded circuits, improper wiring, or arcing and sparking inside walls.

In older homes, heat means too much electrical current is being drawn through outlets. If your receptacles or plugs are hot to the touch, you may have an overload. When too much current gets drawn, wires heat up, baking and eventually weakening the insulation.

Older homes often lack an adequate number of wall outlets, resulting in increased use of extension cords, creating additional hazards.

If your home exhibits any of the symptoms of inadequate wiring, arrange for a licensed electrical contractor to do a full inspection and make the necessary repairs.

Electric capacity is a major concern with older wiring systems. Homeowners in the 1930s didn't use a lot of electrical appliances, except for a refrigerator, a few lights and a radio.

An explosion of appliance purchases followed in the late 1940s and early '50s. But the arrival of air conditioning during the 1960s soon rendered many mid-century home electrical systems obsolete. Wiring in residences built as recently as 20 years ago might be insufficient for handling entertainment systems and personal computers.

You should not assume all is well simply because fuses aren't blowing, circuit breakers aren't tripping or you're not receiving shocks or smelling burnt plastic. Inside the walls, wire insulation could be cracking and crumbling, especially if wires are drawing more current than they were designed to handle.

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What to look for in an HVAC Contractor

It's no secret that replacing your heating and cooling system can be a headache. When's the right time? What kind of system is best? Where can I find a reliable contractor?

Because the right contractor remains the critical cog in this process—for determining the type and size of the unit needed, explaining your options, and proper installation—consider these tips before making a selection.



Ask the HVAC contractor to provide detailed estimates on several different systems with varying efficiency ratings for you to compare.

Ask around

What are the contractor's credentials and qualifications? Is the contractor a member of state and national contractor associations, such as Air Conditioning Contractors of America? Is he or she adequately insured?

Almost 50 percent of a typical home's energy bill comes from an HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system, so it is important to have the right person install and maintain the equipment.

Word of mouth provides a valuable

resource, so ask neighbors and friends if they can recommend a good contractor—or if there's someone you should avoid. And remember to check on what a prospective contractor guarantees and whether any follow-up services, such as a maintenance agreement, are offered. Nail down the details before work begins.

What the contractor and you should do

After you ask these questions, a good contractor should start by inspecting your home and old system and then explaining your options.

Be sure to get the estimated annual operating cost of the proposed HVAC system at different efficiency levels, as recommended by the government's Energy Star program. Air conditioners are measured by Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio and Energy Efficiency Ratio. SEER is calculated by dividing the amount of cooling provided during a normal year by energy used—the higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. EER helps if you want to know how a system operates at a specific temperature. This will help you determine the total cost over its lifetime.

Be sure the estimate details what is being done, what equipment is being provided and when installation will begin and be completed.

NATE certification

Finally, consider looking for someone who is certified by NATE (North American Technician Excellence). Remember, though, because NATE is a voluntary process, a contractor isn't necessarily a bad installer if she or he doesn't have the credentials.

A NATE-certified contractor will have gone through the steps to prove he or she has the skills necessary for the job. Although it doesn't guarantee the contractor is good, it does provide some extra evidence to help consumers know that the person they're hiring has been tested.

3 SIMPLE WORDS

There are many things you can do around the house to help save money and energy all year long, but perhaps the most important advice comes in three simple words:

TURN IT OFF

► Don't leave the computer in sleep mode, and don't leave that video game on pause. These electronics are still using energy, even when you aren't using them. An easy way to remember this is to plug your electronics into a power strip—then you can shut them all off at once.

► If you aren't in the room, turn off the lights.

► That second fridge sure is convenient and leaves you with a steady supply of cold drinks. However, it's also costing you about \$15 a month.

FOLLOW THE STAR

► Switch out those incandescent lightbulbs for their Energy Star-rated LED or CFL counterparts and cut your energy use for lighting by 75 percent.

► Reduce your electric bill by \$75 a year by switching to an Energy Star washing machine. Modern Energy Star-rated washing machines use less water to get clothes just as clean. They also spin faster, reducing drying time.



Texas Division of Emergency Management

Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines

Preparing for Hurricane Season: June 1-November 30

Residents of Texas Gulf Coast **EVACUATION ZONES** should **BEGIN NOW** by making an evacuation plan, preparing an emergency kit and learning evacuation routes well in advance.



- **If you have special health care needs, register by dialing 2-1-1:** Gulf coast residents with special health care needs (including those who are disabled or medically fragile) who live in evacuation zones and do not have friends or family to help in an evacuation should register for assisted transportation in advance by dialing 2-1-1. The 2-1-1 transportation assistance registry must be dialed **IN ADVANCE**. It is confidential. Do not wait until a storm is in the Gulf to register for assistance.
- **If you need transportation, register with 2-1-1:** If you do not have a car or other vehicle, and you cannot get a ride with friends, neighbors or family, register **IN ADVANCE** for assisted transportation by dialing 2-1-1.
- **Evacuation zone information:** If you are interested in registering and you want to find out whether you are living in an evacuation zone, dial 2-1-1 for information.

Hurricane Preparedness tips online:

Texas Division of Emergency Management website: txdps.state.tx.us/dem

FEMA website: Ready.gov

Red Cross website: redcross.org

División de Administración de Emergencias de Texas

Directrices para Huracanes

Preparando para la temporada de huracanes durante el 1 de junio hasta el 30 de noviembre

Los residentes de zonas de evacuación de la Costa del Golfo de Texas deberán empezar ahora a hacer un plan de evacuación, preparando un equipo de emergencia y aprendiendo bien las rutas de evacuación por adelantado.



- **Si usted tiene necesidad especial de asistencia médica, regístrese llamando al 2-1-1:** Los residentes de la Costa del Golfo con necesidades especiales de asistencia médica (incluyendo los que son incapacitados o médicamente frágil) que viven en zonas de evacuación y no tienen amigos o familiares para ayudar en una evacuación deben registrarse por adelantado para la asistencia de transporte llamando al 2-1-1. El registro de asistencia de transporte se debe hacer por adelantado llamando al 2-1-1. Es confidencial. No espere hasta que una tormenta esté en el Golfo para registrarse para la ayuda.
- **Si usted necesita transporte, regístrese llamando al 2-1-1.** Si usted no tiene un coche ni otro tipo de vehículo, y usted no puede obtener transporte con amigos, vecinos o familiares, regístrese por adelantado para su traslado e llamando al 2-1-1.
- **Información sobre la zona de evacuación:** Si usted está interesado en registrarse y quiere determinar si usted vive en una zona de evacuación, llame a 2-1-1.

Para mayor información sobre La Preparación para la Temporada de Huracanes en el Internet:

listo.gov

cruzrojaamericana.org

txdps.state.tx.us/dem