

Midwest Energy, Inc. Current Comments

March 2023

Making energy work for YOU

Energy Scam Calls Become More Creative Understanding How Scammers Operate is Key to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Each spring, Midwest Energy sees a spike in the number of customers reporting scam calls, with people claiming to be from Midwest Energy trying to extract payments and personal information from customers over the phone.

But as Midwest Energy and other utilities have been using tools to shut down phone numbers associated with scams, the scammers have evolved their tactics.

"In the past, scammers often used 'spoofing' software to make it appear that the call originates from the 785 or 620 area code, and those calls were likely coming from outside the U.S.," said Jenna Zeman, Midwest's Manager of Customer Service. "Recently, we had a scammer using his actual number in McPherson, calling our customers and demanding payment."

Here's some of the common scams reported to Midwest:

1. Disconnection: You receive a call from a scammer, who informs you that your last payment to Midwest Energy did not go through, and you must make immediate payment to avoid disconnection within the next 30 minutes.

2. The Merger: The scammer insists that Midwest Energy has merged with another company, and that the banking info you had did not carry over as part of

the merger. To avoid payment issues or disconnection, you'll need to provide your banking information to the 'new' company.

3. The Refund: You answer the phone, and the scammer claims they are Midwest Energy, and that "Midwest Energy" has been over-billing you. They ask for your credit card information to issue a refund to you.

While these are the most common scams, be wary of any person who calls asking for personal information.

"If your account is delinquent, our first contact with you is always by a mailed

letter, not an email or a phone call. And we never dictate a method of payment to the customer. How a customer chooses to pay is up to them," Zeman stated. "If we are to issue a refund for any reason, it will always be done via check," she added.

Zeman said the simplest way to avoid falling victim to scams is to never provide payment information on a call that you didn't initiate. "If someone calls claiming to be Midwest Energy, the safest thing to do is simply hang up and call us at 1-800-222-3121," she said. "We are always happy to talk with customers about their real accounts during our business hours, Monday - Friday from 8am to 5pm."

SCAM ALERT



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Midwest Energy Needs Your Current Cell Number

Since July 2022, Midwest Energy has been using the TextPower text message service to notify customers of energy emergencies and planned outages. Midwest is asking customers to call us at 1-800-222-3121 to ensure we have your current cell phone number on file.

Midwest **only** uses texts for emergency notifications, never for marketing purposes. For example, when equipment issues caused natural gas pressure to drop in WaKeeney, Kan., last December, Midwest was able to use TextPower to notify all customers of the issue within minutes.

Texts do not replace existing methods of outbound phone calls to notify customers of planned

outages, or inbound calls from customers calling to report power outages or gas emergencies.

With TextPower, your cell phone number is categorized by the type of service (electric or gas) you receive from us, as well as your location. This ensures you only receive texts that directly impact you.

The Midwest Energy text number is 785-625-3437. This is the only phone number that messages will be sent from. Do not interact with text messages claiming to be Midwest Energy that are sent from other numbers.

Again, it is extremely important we have an up-to-date cell phone number in order to reach you about urgent information. Please

contact your local Midwest Energy office at 1-800-222-3121 to ensure we have your latest information.



Are You a "Health Alert" Customer?

Do you or a member of your household use essential medical equipment that runs on electricity or natural gas? If so, you might qualify for designation as a Midwest Energy "Health Alert" critical customer.

If you have special medical needs, visit your local Midwest Energy office, or give us a call and ask if you qualify as a "Health Alert" customer.

After completing a short form, if you meet the requirements your meter and account are tagged, alerting our employees that you have special medical needs.

The critical customer designa-



tion is especially helpful to us during planned outages, but does not change priority of service restoration after an unplanned outage, such as during storms.

Call us at 1-800-222-3121 to learn more about becoming a "Health Alert" customer.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov

Atwood, KS • Colby, KS • Great Bend, KS • Hays, KS

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1-800-222-3121
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