

ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

BY RYAN ELARTON GENERAL MANAGER

Consumers with water, gas, and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. And 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.

San Isabel Electric Association wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether it results in a financial loss or leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share 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 sell something, to steal consumers' money, or steal personal information.

Recently, we've seen scammers going door-to-door or calling consumers, stating they represent or work with San Isabel Electric, when in fact they work for a solar company. In many instances, the salesperson states they need to look at your meter or discuss your electric bill. Sometimes the salesperson does not realize the company they are working for has no affiliation with us. They are simply reciting the material they were trained with. But still, a company that trains its employees to lie to potential customers should not be trusted.

Another common trick scammers use is to fraudulently claim a consumer's bill is past due and they'll threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a



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variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails, and even in-person visits.

These scams are becoming even harder to spot because 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. In last month's issue of this magazine, we warned of another recent scam that uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage. And what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines

SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



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 at stealing your personal information.

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. They'll claim 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 in 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 SAN ISABEL ELECTRIC WILL (AND WON'T) DO

SIEA does have several programs and employees dedicated to supporting member-owners who want to add solar generation to their home or business. We even work with preferred vendors to sell solar generation systems and finance them on your electric bill. But we will never go door-to-door to sell you something. In fact, SIEA does not send employees to homes without prior notice, and we will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notice or warning. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

SIEA will never ask for your banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options, including in person, by mail, phone, through

our app, website, and more. For a detailed list of secure payment options, visit siea.com/waystopay.

AVOIDING SCAMS

Whether in person, over the phone, or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be a SIEA employee requesting to look at your meter, discuss your bill, banking, or other personal information. When it comes to texting, we will only send you text messages if you have opted in for important alerts through our SmartHub app.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at 800-279-SIEA (7432) and we can assist. San Isabel Electric wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, 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.



DONATION IMPACT REPORT



San Isabel Electric operates under seven cooperative principles which includes practicing a Concern for Community. Each board member lives in the community they serve, and we all work together to help our communities thrive.

Each month, the board of directors donates to community projects to help keep our communities strong and growing. All philanthropic funding comes from unclaimed capital credits not from member rates and electric bills. Our process for using unclaimed capital credits follows state law for unclaimed property. Unclaimed capital credits cannot be used for system improvements, maintenance, payroll or other overhead costs.

For more information about capital credits and unclaimed capital credit, visit siea.com/capitalcredits.

The following donations were approved during the February and March board meetings. All donations were matched by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

APRIL

\$1,500

- La Veta Creative District, winter holiday town decorations
- Friends of Hollydot, 7th Annual Golf Tournament

\$1,300

- Peakview Elementary, concession supplies

\$1,000

- Friends of Aguilar – Celebrating Aguilar Street Festival & Car Show
- Huerfano County Chamber of Commerce, Relay for Life Golf Tournament

\$900

- La Veta Beatification, downtown flower planters

\$750

- Valley Backpacks, school supply drive

\$500

- Pueblo West High School FBLA, state conference
- Colorado State University – Pueblo Healy Center, Southern Colorado Entrepreneurship Competition

PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMERO SCHOOL DISTRICT RESULTS IN NEW GRID RESILIENCY PILOT PROGRAM

In today's electric-powered world, energy innovation is taking center stage. For electric cooperatives like San Isabel Electric Association, we have a "good" problem to solve.

First of all, SIEA is a not-for-profit distribution cooperative. That means we buy electricity at a wholesale rate. Then, we distribute it to our members for the same price that it costs us to buy and distribute that power to you. If there's left over money after operation costs, it is returned to members.

With the increased adoption of electric products such as vehicles, bikes, water heaters, HVAC, and more, we have an increased demand for our products and services. There is immediate pressure to innovate. And we are doing so by creating programs designed to manage energy use more effectively.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

One of these programs is a demand reduction program. These initiatives encourage member-owners to use electricity during off-peak hours when demand is lower, and costs are reduced. By doing so, utilities can balance the load on the grid and avoid costly upgrades.

SIEA's latest move: a time-of-use pilot program. This takes demand reduction programs one step further. This innovative approach pairs solar generation and battery storage with a time-of-use rate to offer discounted electricity during specific hours. It's a win-win for consumers and the grid.

HOW DID IT ALL START?

It began with a partnership between SIEA and the Primero RE-2 School District. When the district acquired electric school buses, SIEA was called to handle the charging infrastructure.



▲ A partnership between Primero RE-2 School District and San Isabel Electric helps the district's electric school buses charge more cost-effectively.

At the time, the buses were being charged during peak hours, driving up costs for both the district and SIEA. Jack Snell, SIEA's energy services manager, quickly found two solutions.

First, he reprogrammed the chargers to schedule charging during off-peak times. Then he switched the chargers to a time-of-day rate, which financially incentivized the use of electricity during off-peak times, when demand is lower and electricity costs less.

"This small move, combined with the 2024 TOD rate, should save the school district around \$15 per day in charging and drastically reduce the demand to SIEA's power bill and system," Snell said.

With grant funding, a roof-mounted solar array was installed on the school's community center and a battery was installed to match charging demand. The battery completely covers electricity usage during on-peak hours, which saves both the school and SIEA's members money.

THE STORY DOESN'T END THERE.

SIEA currently has four members participating in the new solar-battery-storage pilot program. This program recognizes

the untapped potential of pairing solar generation with battery storage and a time-of-day rate. Once we complete the pilot phase, we will open the final program to our membership.

If you are interested in the battery pilot program, email energyservices@siea.com or call 800-279-SIEA and ask for the Energy Services Department.

Please note: Without a battery, time-of-day rates do not make much sense to many solar owners. That's because off-peak times are during the night, when the sun isn't shining and solar arrays are not generating electricity. On the time-of-day rate, member-owners can get electricity at nearly half the regular rate during certain times of the day. Residential members interested in the time-of-day rate must have an electric vehicle using a home EV charger, a qualifying battery storage device, or an electric thermal storage heater. More information about the time-of-day rate is available at siea.com/timeofday.

A FEAST FOR THE EYES: LOCAL POTTERS COMMISSIONED TO CREATE SIEA ANNUAL MEETING BOWLS

As the anticipation builds for San Isabel Electric Association's upcoming annual meeting, we are thrilled to announce a continuation of our tradition of supporting local artisans. Following last year's success of including a handcrafted mug in our annual meeting member gift, we are delighted to unveil this year's special gift: locally made bowls. The bowls will be crafted with care by the same three talented potters from our community who created mugs last year.

Meet the Artisans

Lori Hannan: With more than 25 years of experience, Lori's work reflects her deep connection to nature. Her signature style — characterized by earthy glazes and raw clay bottoms — promises to bring a touch of the outdoors to each bowl.

Patti Paiz-Jones: Renowned for her mastery of sgraffito, Patti infuses her creations with intricate designs inspired by the beauty of our surroundings. Her hand-drawn motifs will grace our bowls, serving as a testament to the natural splendor of our region.

Sumi Von Dassow: A seasoned potter with more than four decades of experience, Sumi's vibrant and dynamic pottery captures the colors of Southern Colorado's landscape. Her use of overlapping glazes will imbue each bowl with a sense of energy and vitality.

Embracing Local Artistry

At SIEA, we believe in celebrating the rich tapestry of talent within our community. By commissioning these locally made bowls, we not only honor the craftsmanship of Lori, Patti, and Sumi but also reaffirm our commitment to supporting our region's artisans.

All of SIEA's member-owners are invited to join us at this year's annual meeting, where they will receive their special gift — which includes a beautifully crafted bowl designed to be cherished for years to come.

We hope to see you at our annual meeting, Saturday, September 21 at Walsenburg Junior/Senior High School!



SIEA Wishes Shauna Vucetich a Happy Retirement



▲ Shauna Vucetich looks forward to “recharging her battery” in retirement, after 12 years at San Isabel Electric.

Shauna Vucetich wraps up her 12 year career at San Isabel Electric this month. Her SIEA family knows her for her wonderful laugh, love of animals, and incredible attention to detail.

For most of her tenure at SIEA, Shauna worked as a Member Service Representative in the Trinidad and Pueblo West offices. Over the last four years, she worked in the billing department where she took on the crucial responsibility of importing, monitoring, and verifying the accuracy of meter reads.

While Shauna found fulfillment in her work, it is the camaraderie of her colleagues and friends that she will miss the most. She said their support and companionship made

every day special for her.

When asked about retirement, she said she is eagerly anticipating moving to the country and recharging her battery. “My battery light is blinking,” she joked. Shauna is ready to immerse herself in doing the things she’s always wanted more time to do: reading, gardening, canning, quilting, and enjoying the peace and quiet. “I finally have come to a point in my life where I might actually get to do some things I really have been longing to do and have the time to do them,” she said.

Good luck, Shauna! We hope your days are filled with endless sunshine, laughter, and nature.

