

How to Shut Down Scammers Threatening to Cut Your Power

by Indira Everett

Scammers can hit anytime or anywhere. When you are least expecting it, you could get a call to pay up or lose your power. It's important to know what to look for and how to protect yourself from utility scams.

Duke Energy has joined forces with natural gas and electric utility companies across the United States and Canada to inform customers and protect them from imposter utility scams. By sharing information and working together, Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS), is arming customers with the knowledge to spot scams and protect their information.

While Duke Energy customers have become nearly 50 percent less susceptible to scams since the formation of UUAS in 2016, scams continue to evolve and become more sophisticated. By knowing what to look for, customers can continue to shut down scammers and protect their wallets and personal information.

Scammers posing as utility representatives

use a variety of email, in-person and phone tactics to target families and businesses to steal money. According to Hiya, a phone spam protection company, utility scams grew 109 percent in 2016.

"As the Toll-Free Neutral Administrator, Somos is concerned about the integrity of toll-free numbers," said Joel Bernstein, vice president of regulatory and public policy at Somos. "In partnership with UUAS over the past six months, we've shut down more than 500 toll-free numbers running utility scams, making it more difficult for scammers to victimize customers of Duke Energy and other participating utilities."

COMMON SCAM TACTICS

Power disconnection threats: Customers may receive threats to turn off electric service—usually in less than an hour—if a large payment is not made.

Immediate payment requests: Customers are asked to quickly purchase a prepaid debit card and provide the card information, which grants the scammer instant access to personal funds. Some scammers may also request a money wire.

Calls that appear to be from your utility: Scammers may rig caller ID to make it look like the call is from a service provider.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

We encourage customers who suspect a scam to hang up and call Duke Energy immediately at the phone number listed on their bill, followed by a call to the police. Never dial the phone number the scammers provide.

Do not pay over the phone if immediate payment is demanded to avoid disconnection. Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification from Duke Energy with the regular monthly billing

— never a single notification an hour before disconnection.

Duke Energy never asks or requires a customer with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection. Customers can make payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

Duke Energy works closely with law enforcement and local attorneys general and business organizations to denounce scams and help protect communities.

For more information on how to spot a utility scam and protect personal information, visit duke-energy.com/StopScams

Indira Everett is Government and Community Relations Manager at Duke Energy, representing Chatham, Lee, Orange and Durham counties.

TOUR

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Square diamond pendant by Roberta Marasca

computer programmer who took up photography. And if you're a nature-lover (which is why so many of us live here, right?), you'll find many stories of art inspired by nature.

With 49 participating artists at 36 studios this year, tour-goers are unlikely to make it to every studio (that would require 9 studio visits on all 4 days—a little ambitious!), but these interviews will give you a glimpse into many of them and can help you plan your route around those who you just have to see in person! Coming to the Opening Reception on Friday December 1 at 7 p.m. at Chatham Mills is another great way to plan your route around art you'll love, as every Tour artist has a piece in that show. We're all inspired in different

ways—do a little artistic exploration and find your own inspiration on this year's tour!

Held the first two weekends in December annually, the 2017 Chatham Studio Tour is thrilled to celebrate 25 years at the center of the county's vibrant arts scene. Pick up a Studio Tour brochure at many local shops around town, or download the map online: www.chathamartistsguild.org. It's a self-guided tour, so make a plan, pile your family and friends in the car, and hit the road!

— Forrest Greenslade and Amy Eller

2017 Chatham Studio Tour Opening Reception

Friday, December 1: 7pm–9pm
Chatham Mills, 480 Hillsborough Street, Pittsboro

Chatham County Studio Tour: 1st weekend

Saturday, December 2: 10am–5pm
Sunday, December 3: Noon–5pm

Chatham County Studio Tour: 2nd weekend

Saturday, December 10: 10am–5pm
Sunday, December 11: Noon–5pm

In honor of the 25th Anniversary, the Chatham Artists Guild has been interviewing this year's Tour artists and compiling a collection of those interviews on their blog (www.chathamartistsguild.org). Learn about the long standing tour artists as well as those who have joined more recently. Within their stories you'll learn of an electrician turned sculptor, a scientist who has painted "on the side" during his entire career, and a potter who apprenticed right here in Chatham County with Mark Hewitt as well as other potters across the state. You might be fascinated to learn about a concert pianist/

Many schools have become places with no time or space for those who march to the beat of their own drum...
We like the music better over here.

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Truth

BY LOU LIPSITZ

One December, right after Xmas,
I went walking in Duke Forest. It
was about 20 degrees.

One or two others were out.

Mostly, I walked on alone,
the cold gradually freezing my feet
and hands. I stayed out
way too long. I did not want to
go back to the house
and be in your presence,
knowing you would never
tell me the truth.

PARADE DAY LUNCH FUNDRAISER

Angelina's Kitchen
Drive-Thru "Lunch Plates" Fundraiser



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10
11:30-2:00
\$12 per plate

Includes 1/2 chicken,
green beans, roll,
and brownie.
Drinks available for \$1.

2018

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

how they are elected should change in Chatham County and Circle City in 2018.

Chatham County and Pittsboro are experiencing a significant growth—especially along the 15-501 corridor. The current district map for the County Commissioners is out of date since more than 90 percent of the population growth is concentrated from Pittsboro North to Pittsboro North East. This is further exacerbated by the tremendous growth of Briar Chapel, which is adding more than 300 homes per year. And Chatham Park has yet to add a single residence, a fact that will change in 2018.

One solution is to realign the districts after the 2020 census to better balance the populations contained in the five current districts. Another solution would be a realignment of said districts augmented by the addition of two new at-large county commissioners, who would be elected county-wide.

This change would allow for 1) flexibility as the County grows, and 2) the ability for the current board to better represent its constituents by spreading out the workload amongst seven elected officials as opposed to the current five commissioners. And this is not plowing new ground as Lee, Orange, and Wake Counties all are served by seven county commissioners.

Chatham County could accomplish board expansion in two ways: 1) Let the voters decide. Put this up for a vote by referendum in the spring during the primary of 2018, or 2) request through Rep. Reives and Sen. Foushee that the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA)

alter the local bill from the 1970's that currently governs the number of commissioners serving Chatham County and how they are elected.

Given the potential for growth in the Circle City, Pittsboro officials should also explore this idea to better balance its board and reconcile its relationship with growth. One solution would be to create four (4) distinct districts in Pittsboro with two members and the Mayor running at-large.

This would allow each geographic section of the town to be represented, it would add another member to the board that would account for growth and it would give a vote to the Mayor.

This would also potentially put the board majority up for a vote every two years as opposed to every four years, which would be more responsive to local needs and changes in the community.

Again this idea is not new. Former Commissioner Max Cotten proposed changes in the past that were discussed by the Town Board, but never moved forward.

With the current growth curve Pittsboro is facing, it would be best for the town and county to let the citizens have input and decide in order to make the necessary changes now before the growth happens and the proverbial horse is out of the barn and running wild in our pastures.

Randy Voller is the former Mayor of Pittsboro, a consultant, business owner and Democratic/progressive political activist.

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