



AG STRANGE WARNS OF FRAUDULENT COLLECTIONS

MONTGOMERY – Attorney General Luther Strange warns of recurring scams in which consumers are asked to send money to either pay a supposed debt or as a fee to receive prizes or merchandise.

In recent days, there have been reports from Huntsville and Birmingham of people receiving fraudulent calls threatening that their power was about to be disconnected if they did not immediately pay by providing credit card information or by purchasing and sending a disposable debit card. In response to this, the actual electrical utilities issued public warnings urging consumers not to provide information or payments, but to contact the company directly.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division periodically receives inquiries and complaints about similar scams, with scammers often claiming to represent utilities companies that provide electricity, natural gas, telephone or cable service.

"These scams use fear and intimidation to trick people into thinking they owe money and to send payments quickly or they may lose an essential or highly-valued service," said Attorney General Strange. "I urge Alabamians to be suspicious of any such calls and to not be frightened into sending money they may not owe and which may be impossible to recover."

Attorney General Strange tells consumers to take extreme care in any wire transfers of money, in sending disposable debit cards, or in providing their financial information. He offers the following advice:

- Ask the person calling for their name and contact information, but do not rely on what they tell you.
- Look up the contact information of the company they claim to represent, verify it for yourself, and contact the company directly.
- If someone says you must act immediately, either to get a prize, to pay a fee, or to stop disconnection of a service, refuse to handle this with them on the telephone, but tell them that you will take care of it by contacting the company directly for yourself.
- If they persist in demanding immediate payment, tell them that you will report the matter to local law enforcement, the company they claim to represent, and the Attorney General's Office.

Consumers may contact Attorney General Strange's Consumer Protection Section by calling toll-free 1-800-392-5658 or through the website at <http://ago.alabama.gov/Page-Consumer-Protection>.

