

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Affairs, 301-274-4448

www.smeco.coop

February 10, 2015

SMECO issues warning about payment scam

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) has been alerted to a fraud scam in which customers are asked to provide payment information in order to avoid having their electric service disconnected. According to Tom Dennison, managing director of government and public affairs, several customers have recently notified SMECO that they have received fraudulent calls from people threatening to disconnect their electric service. He said, "We continue to issue alerts when we receive notifications from customers that these scams are taking place. Not only are they a nuisance, but these scam artists can potentially steal thousands of dollars from unsuspecting residents and businesses. We believe we can help prevent this type of crime by educating our customers whenever we hear about a new method being used to trick people out of their hard-earned money."

Dennison added, "If customers receive a phone call from someone threatening to disconnect their power, they may hang up and call SMECO directly. Our contact center is open 24 hours a day, every day. SMECO's phone number is 1-888-440-3311. The phone number is printed at the top of the bill and that's the number customers should use to reach our contact center." Dennison said that SMECO warns customer-members not to provide personal financial or electric account information to unauthorized callers. Customers should not provide Green Dot or Moneygram payments to callers claiming to be from SMECO.

"Customer-members should know how much they owe and when payments are due. Electric utilities follow state regulations and have set schedules for billing and payment," Dennison explained. SMECO bills are issued monthly. Overdue amounts are identified on a customer's bill. If payments are late, SMECO sends a pink termination notice. "Customers should never provide personal financial or electric account information to unauthorized callers," Dennison said. For more information about email scams, phone scams, and SMECO's collection process, customers can visit SMECO's website at <http://www.smeco.coop/yourSafety/scamAlerts.aspx>.

SMECO is a customer-owned electric cooperative providing electricity to more than 156,000 services in southern Prince George's County, and in Charles County, St. Mary's County, and all but the northeast portion of Calvert County. Co-ops are distinctly different from investor-owned utilities because co-ops are owned by their customers, and these members elect the men and women who serve on the Board of Directors.

Co-ops also issue capital credits to their members. What are capital credits? They are the member's share of the co-op's margins, based on how much electricity the member purchased and the rate at which the account was billed. SMECO's margins—revenue less expenses—are used as working capital for new construction and system improvements. When SMECO's Board of Directors determines that a percentage of the capital credits can be distributed to members through a general refund, capital credits will be issued by check or credited to members' electric bills.

Follow SMECO on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SMECO.coop and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/somdelectric . The SMECO 24/7 mobile app is available at www.smeco.coop/ourservices/smeco247.aspx.

-- end --