



# Hunterdon County Sheriff's Office

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Chief Warrant Officer

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 28, 2022**

## **Hunterdon County Sheriff Fred W. Brown and Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) Have Issued An Important Joint Warning To Residents About Scams Targeting Utility Customers**

Hunterdon County Sheriff Fred W. Brown joins with Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) and its parent company, FirstEnergy, to warn residents about scams targeting utility customers with sophisticated tactics and threats of power disconnection unless large sums of money are paid to the scammers.

Sheriff Brown said, "Since 2020 there has been a significant increase in all types of scams, often targeting the most vulnerable in our communities. While scams are active year-round, utility scams are most prevalent in winter and summer months when customers need heat or air conditioning.

JCP&L sent out an alert after receiving on-going reports from customers about utility scams tricking customers into giving away personal information and paying 'unpaid bills' to avoid service disconnection."

JCP&L reported more than 3500 attempted scams in 2021 and remind customers to remain vigilant against utility imposters who claim to be associated with their company.

Sheriff Brown has warned the Hunterdon community of other energy and utility scams in the past, but noted that, "many residents are still experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic. It is important to share this information and help the community avoid further financial difficulties."

JCP&L customers can avoid falling victim to a utility scam by keeping the following information in mind:

- JCP&L often make courtesy calls to remind customers about outstanding balances and send written notices of a possible disconnection, but they do NOT call or email to demand immediate payment to avoid a same-day shutoff.
- Utility impostors often require that you use unusual payment methods like digital payment apps, cryptocurrencies or money transfers. Only send payments to your FirstEnergy electric company using [established payment methods](#).

- FirstEnergy field collectors working in New Jersey will offer customers with past-due accounts the opportunity to pay their bill in person before disconnecting service. All employees carry company-issued photo identification.
- Imposters often use Caller ID spoofing software to misrepresent the source of a phone call to further mislead and confuse their targets. Call-back numbers provided by these criminals often use greetings and hold messages that mimic legitimate businesses. Always contact your electric company using the phone number listed on your bill or on the FirstEnergy [website](#).
- If you suspect a scam, hang up or close the door and contact your local police department and FirstEnergy.
- If you have any doubts about the status of your account or the identity of a FirstEnergy employee, contact your electric company at the number listed on your bill or the company's website. Never call the number the scammer provides.

Sheriff Brown advised potential scam victims to hang up if you suspect that the caller is an imposter.

“Ending the call is your first line of defense and often the best way to avoid a financial loss. Contact your local police department or call the utility company directly to notify them of the scam attempt,” Sheriff Brown concluded.

JCP&L remind customers that they should only pay their bill directly on the company website.

If the account has a past-due amount or is in collections, the utility will not send someone directly to the client's home demanding payment.

Customers can visit the FirstEnergy scam information page at [www.firstenergycorp.com/scaminfo](http://www.firstenergycorp.com/scaminfo) for updates and information on emerging scam activity.