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**Scammers Swindled Nearly \$900,000 from PG&E Customers in 2023.  
Here's How Not to Be a Victim.**

*Reminders on How to Recognize and Avoid Potential Scams*

OAKLAND, Calif. — Scammers continue to take advantage of Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) customers. In fact, in 2023, PG&E received nearly 43,000 reports from customers who were targeted by scammers impersonating the company, and customers lost approximately \$875,000 in fraudulent payments, with the average customer losing \$785.

That's why PG&E joins the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to help customers recognize and avoid potential scams.

Reports of utility scams targeting customers were at an all-time high during 2023. On the Central Coast alone, from Paso Robles to Buellton, 180 customers fell victim to scammers.

**Here's the breakdown by cities and number of customers affected in 2023, locally:**

- Santa Maria, 66
- Paso Robles, 45
- San Luis Obispo, 36
- Atascadero, 15
- Arroyo Grande, 6
- Grover Beach, 6
- Buellton, 2
- Guadalupe, 2
- Cambria 1
- Cayucos 1

Unfortunately, these numbers are likely just the tip of the iceberg for overall scam attempts, as many go unreported. The number of reports is continuing at a high level thus far in 2024, as PG&E received over 2,500 reports of attempted scams in January alone, with customers paying scammers over \$67,000 during the month.

“Scammers will attempt to create a sense of urgency by threatening immediate disconnection of your utility services if you don't make immediate payment. Remember, PG&E will never ask you for financial information over the phone, nor will we ask for payment via pre-paid debit cards or money transfer services like Zelle. If you receive a call like this, hang up, and then either log onto PGE.com to confirm your account details, or you can call our customer service number,” said Matt Foley, lead customer scam investigator for PG&E.

Scammers are opportunistic and look for times when customers may be distracted or stressed and are constantly contacting utility customers asking for immediate payment to avoid service

disconnection. As a reminder, PG&E will never send a single notification to a customer within one hour of a service interruption, and we will never ask customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, any form of cryptocurrency, or third-party digital payment mobile applications like Zelle or Venmo.

Scammers can be convincing and often target those who are most vulnerable, including senior citizens and low-income communities. They also aim their scams at small business owners during busy customer service hours. However, with the right information, customers can learn to detect and report these predatory scams.

### **Signs of a potential scam**

- **Threat to disconnect:** Scammers may aggressively demand immediate payment for an alleged past due bill.
- **Request for immediate payment:** Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card then call them back supposedly to make a bill payment.
- **Request for prepaid card:** When the customer calls back, the caller asks the customer for the prepaid card's number, which grants the scammer instant access to the card's funds.
- **Refund or rebate offers:** Scammers may say that your utility company overbilled you and owes you a refund, or that you are entitled to a rebate.

### **How customers can protect themselves**

Customers should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. PG&E does not specify how customers should make a bill payment and offers a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

If a scammer threatens immediate disconnection or shutoff of service without prior notification, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door. Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification, typically by mail and included with their regular monthly bill.

Signing up for an online account at [pge.com](http://pge.com) is another safeguard. Not only can customers log in to check their balance and payment history, they can sign up for recurring payments, paperless billing and helpful alerts.

**Scammers Impersonating Trusted Phone Numbers:** Scammers are now able to create authentic-looking 800 numbers which appear on your phone display. The numbers don't lead back to PG&E if called back, however, so if you have doubts, hang up and call PG&E at 1-833-500-SCAM. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 911.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud, or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scammers, should contact local law enforcement. The Federal Trade Commission's website is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

For more information about scams, visit [pge.com/scams](http://pge.com/scams) or [consumer.ftc.org](http://consumer.ftc.org).

### **About PG&E**

Pacific Gas and Electric Company, a subsidiary of PG&E Corporation (NYSE:PCG), is a combined natural gas and electric utility serving more than 16 million people across 70,000 square miles in Northern and Central California. For more information, visit [pge.com](http://pge.com) and [pge.com/news](http://pge.com/news).

