

April 19, 2019

Good Morning Village of Monroe Residents,

Please take a moment to read through the message below from Orange & Rockland Utilities regarding a recent phone scam to one of its customers.

Off-Duty O&R Employee Thwarts Attempted Telephone Scam Robbery

PEARL RIVER, NY April 16, 2019 --- When Shoko Saito stopped by Walgreens in New City Saturday (April 6) to buy a bottle of shampoo, the last thing on her mind was that crooks were sending O&R customers to the same store to buy pre-paid debit cards to pay their bills.

Saito, a senior specialist in O&R's Corporate Affairs Department, was in line at the check-out counter when Raymond Ahmadi rushed into the store with his cell phone on speaker. Ahmadi was looking for something and Saito overheard his caller directing Ahmadi to do something about a gift card.

Ahmadi approached the store cashier and asked him where the gift cards were located. Ahmadi said he was in a hurry because O&R was on the other end of the phone. He said O&R was telling him he must pay \$500 for his smart meter installation with a prepaid debit card immediately or his electric service would be shut off.

Ahmadi, in a subsequent interview said, "I almost had a heart attack when he (the crook) called. I run a car wash, and if I have no electricity, I have no business. No customers."

He added, "The weather was perfect that Saturday for washing your car so if my power was cut off, I'd lose a lot of money."

Saito heard the words "debit card" and sprang into action. She intervened, knowing that O&R does not accept prepaid debit cards for customer bill payment. She told Ahmadi she worked for O&R, and that the caller was trying to steal Ahmadi's money.

She urged him in the strongest possible terms to hang up the phone immediately and he did.

In addition to refusing pre-paid debit cards, including Green Dot cards, for bill payment, O&R does not charge a fee for smart meter installation nor does O&R shut off electric or gas service for non-payment of bills on the weekend.

In fact, O&R does not immediately shut off service to customers for non-payment. Disconnecting O&R electric or gas service for non-payment of bills involves a multi-step process - including written communications from O&R to the customer over a period of weeks or several days, not hours. That process is regulated by the NYS Public Service Commission and NJ Board of Public Utilities.

Saito said, "Mr. Ahmadi was very upset. He had his O&R bill and cash in hand, ready to pay this crook. I'm glad I was there and able to help."

Ahmadi said, "I was very lucky Shoko was in the store or I would have lost \$500 to this thief. I have heard a lot about scams but I never heard of this one."

Saito notified O&R's Security Services about the incident and Customer Service, which followed up with Ahmadi to provide him a fuller explanation of his bill and to reassure him he did not owe a payment at that time.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from O&R or Rockland Electric stating that a payment is required within hours and threatening to immediately shut off your service, O&R urges you to:

- **Hang Up** - Disengage so you're not further subjected to the crook's high-pressure "sales pitch."
- **Text Trouble** - After you hang up on them, the more aggressive crooks will try to repeat their shutoff threat by texting you. Ignore the threat and block them from your cell phone. They are crooks.
- **Don't Hit "REDIAL"** - The caller ID screen on your phone for the crook's call may read "Orange and Rockland Utilities", but that's a hi-tech bogus copy of the utility company's number --- it's not O&R. Do not redial, and don't call the number that the caller gives you to call them back. That will reconnect you to the crook.
- **Fast Track** - If you are unsure about whether you have an overdue balance on your O&R bill, the fastest way to find out is to log onto your account through www.oru.com/myaccount

Be Well,

Neil Dwyer

Mayor