

## **ComEd Warns Customers of Impersonation Scams**

*ComEd offers tips to help customers stay protected*

**CHICAGO** (March 21, 2011) – Spring has arrived, but flowers and trees aren't the only things blooming this season; scammers also are ready to spring into action. While customers are on guard to protect against common seasonal scams such as home improvement, tax, and spring break travel ComEd also is warning customers of another scam that can cost them money and valuable personal information.

In 2010, ComEd saw nearly a 60 percent increase in cases involving con artists impersonating ComEd workers compared to the previous year, with nearly half of the reported cases occurring in the spring. ComEd reports scammers used a variety of tactics to lure customers into handing over money and letting them inside their home. Customers have reported losing as much as \$7,000 from scammers.

"Last year, ComEd received 11 reports of impersonation incidents, up from 7 reports in 2009," said Rita Stols, vice president of Strategic and Support Services, ComEd. "However, thieves aren't just targeting ComEd; other utilities also have reported incidents."

In many of the reported cases, the thieves identified themselves as a worker from the local utility company. Thieves have worn clothing to dress the part, such as a hard hat, items bearing a utility company logo, or a generic orange safety vest. In some instances, the culprits executed the scam in plain clothes.

In a recent reported case, a culprit posing as a ComEd worker asked for permission to enter a home to check the fuse box. Once inside, the culprit used a two-way radio to signal an accomplice outside when to come inside. Other incidents have included scammers asking customers for money to fix parts on their meter and threatening to shut off power if they didn't hand over cash to fix parts on the customer's circuit breaker.

"Safety is our number one priority at ComEd, and that includes our concern for the safety of our customers," Stols added. "We want the public to be aware that ComEd employees always carry proper identification and will never ask customers for cash or personal banking information. Customers also can verify if a ComEd worker is in the area by contacting ComEd."

To help guard against impersonations, ComEd recommends that customers take the following safety precautions:

- Always ask to see a company photo ID before allowing any utility worker into your home or business.
- Never pay on-site for services. ComEd employees will **never** ask for cash payments or personal banking information.
- Be skeptical of individuals wearing clothing with old or defaced company logos. If you have any doubts, ask to see a company photo ID.

If you believe you are a victim of a scam, please report it to your local police and call ComEd security at 800-550-6154.