

# PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COSTLY SCAMS

BY STEVE JOHNSON PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER



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There is one unfortunate trend we hear throughout the year from Yampa Valley Electric Association members: scams and dubious sales activity are happening in our communities. I want to dedicate this month's column to suggest ways YVEA members can spot these scams and hopefully stop scammers in their tracks.

## UTILITY SCAMS

We get reports multiple times a month that members have received a call purportedly from YVEA, demanding immediate payment on their account or their electricity will be turned off. Members are rightfully frustrated by the stress this causes, wondering where they will come up with that amount of money and worrying they may be without power until payment is made. Their frustrations are valid and we too are frustrated that there is little we can do to stop these calls from happening. What we can do, though, is offer ways for you to spot these suspicious calls and hopefully protect YVEA members from utility scams.

**YVEA will never take payment over the phone except through our secure payment option**, and we won't call and demand payment without any prior notice of your account being in arrears. Our Member Services team is always working with members on their accounts and payments. No matter if you missed a payment by mistake or your budget is tighter this month, our team has the services to assist you with your account. We can help with outside agencies to secure additional assistance with bills. We ask that

any member who is having trouble paying their bill reach out to our member services team who will be happy to work with you. **If you ever receive a call from YVEA where the person demands immediate payment, requests payments to be made with gift cards, or calls you outside of our business hours, hang up immediately and call YVEA to speak to a member services representative.**



## PROTECT YOUR SMARTHUB ACCOUNT

Paying your bills online through SmartHub is easy and convenient, but are you doing your part to protect your account in case your information is part of a security breach? As more and more of your transactions are moving online, members may experience security breaches where their information is vulnerable. Make sure your SmartHub account and other online accounts are safe by following these simple rules:

- Never share your SmartHub pin or password
- Create a strong password following these rules:
  1. Include at least eight characters
  2. Use a combination of upper and lowercase letters

3. Include a mixture of letters and numbers
4. Include at least one special character
5. If any of online accounts offer two-factor authentication, set this up to better protect your accounts

Following these guidelines and using different passwords for each online account will help to protect not only your SmartHub account, but also the rest of your online work.

## SOLAR

As YVEA members look into installing solar on their home or business, we have a few tips on page 8 for how to properly vet your contractor to make sure you are getting what you are paying for. YVEA is working on creating a qualified installer program, but until that is in place, the information we have provided will help you ask the right questions of contractors before you sign any documents.

Here at YVEA, we work hard to make sure we deliver safe, reliable, and clean electricity. We hope these simple tricks for spotting utility scams will help protect you when you're online, receive a suspicious call you are unsure about or are considering hiring a solar installation contractor.

*Steve Johnson*

President and General Manager



With the opening of Yampa Valley Sustainability Council's Recycling Depot, starting on March 1, YVEA in Steamboat will no longer be a collection point for residential lightbulb recycling. For more details on the depot, please visit [yvsc.org/yampa-valley-recycles-depot](http://yvsc.org/yampa-valley-recycles-depot).