

Beware of Scams! Did the City of Milwaukee endorse this?

Here's what you should know about promotional materials and door-to-door solicitations

Our customers tell us they frequently receive sales pitches and promotional materials for water-related products and services. The Milwaukee Water Works does not endorse or promote products or services unless directed to do so by Mayor Tom Barrett and the Common Council. In these rare cases, we will send you clear and direct notification about the product or service.

We do not offer or conduct in-home water tests or inspections unless the property owner requests such a service. We cannot judge whether or not a company is reputable, so we recommend you contact the company or the Better Business Bureau to learn about the firm before purchasing any service.

Milwaukee Water Works employees carry photo identification with them at all times and drive City of Milwaukee vehicles marked with the city name. Do not open your door to someone you do not recognize or if you are not sure of the person's identity.

Here are some recent water-related scams and actual promotions:

- Two Spanish-speaking customers called us in mid-February to report they had received a postcard in the mail from a company based in California. The postcard asked for access to their home to test the water quality for free. One of the customers said he called the telephone number on the card and an operator demanded his credit card information and threatened his water service would be disconnected if he did not give it to the company over the phone.
- Various companies advertise and offer optional insurance water and or/sewer service line insurance. The City of Milwaukee does not require or endorse this type of product. The service lines are the pipes that connect the water main in the street or the sewer to the property. It belongs to the property owner. Repair and maintenance are the responsibility of the property owner, not the utility or the City of Milwaukee. The insurance programs are optional -- you are not obligated to purchase the insurance.
- Customers have received calls and mailings from the Service Line Warranty program that the City of Milwaukee had endorsed in February 2012. The City of Milwaukee is NO LONGER in a partnership

with Service Line Warranty as of June 2013. Service Line Warranty is not permitted to use the City of Milwaukee logo or include wording that states the City of Milwaukee endorsed their product.

- **HomeServe USA Repair Management Corp.** frequently mails letters to property owners asking for credit/debit card information and a response within 30 days. As reported by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, "... the advertising materials may trick some consumers into thinking the company is affiliated with people's local government and lead them to buy services they don't need." HomeServe recently sent letters to AARP members.
- **Water Works LLC** is a water billing service for mobile home customers, primarily in the area of Pulaski, Wisconsin. Letters sent from Water Works LLC led many Milwaukee Water Works customers to believe they had billing issues with their service provider, when in fact they were not customers of Water Works LLC.
- **Rivernet.org** of Portland, Ore., distributes door hangers asking, "Have you thought about your water use lately?" Here in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Water Works purifies Lake Michigan water, we all consume, use, and enjoy it, and return the water to the lake after treatment by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

The Milwaukee Water Works promotes our "Use Water Wisely" program by helping customers find and repair water leaks to reduce water waste, control water costs, and conserve the water resource. We work with our customers who have unusually high water use to find and fix water leaks.

Contact us for a Use Water Wisely brochure and leak-detecting dye tabs, (414) 286-2830 or watwebcs@milwaukee.gov. Learn about Use Water Wisely on our website, www.milwaukee.gov/water/UseWaterWisely.