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By Linda Spice, of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

City warns of waterworks impostors

Milwaukee officials are warning residents today about people posing as waterworks employees to gain access to homes under the ruse of checking for flood damage.

The warning comes after residents in the last two days reported three instances of people asking to be allowed into homes to check for damage.

The first occurred Monday, when a resident reported that a man appeared at a home near N. 68th St. and W. Capitol Drive, identifying himself as a Milwaukee Water Works employee.

Two other residents reported similar cases on Tuesday after a woman tried to get into a home in the 3100 block of S. 9th St. and a man approached a home in the 2600 block of S. 13th St. In all three cases, the residents refused to allow the people inside and reported the impostors to the Milwaukee Water Works.

The department then notified the Milwaukee Police Department, according to information released today by Cecelia Gilbert, spokeswoman for the city's Department of Public Works.

Gilbert notes that residents should be mindful of people attempting the flood scam, noting that they may carry official-looking credentials and often work in pairs.

City officials suggest the following tips to avoid being victimized:

- Do not open your door to someone you do not recognize. Do not allow anyone to enter your home if you are not sure of his or her identity.
- Ask to see photo identification through a window. Milwaukee Water Works and other utility employees and contractors carry photo I.D. Legitimate employees will be happy to show you their I.D. if you ask, or call the utility office to verify their identification.
- Call the Milwaukee Water Works (414) 286-2830 if you are unsure about a person's identification or to verify work to be done at your home. Call the police if you believe the person is an imposter.
- Do not allow anyone to enter your home claiming to collect a past-due bill, inspect plumbing fixtures, or to sell utility products such as a meter or other equipment. Milwaukee Water Works employees do not engage in door-to-door sales, do not collect a past-due bill in person, and do not deliver rebates or refunds.
- Advise your elderly loved ones, friends and children about what to do if strangers approach their home and ask to come in.