



Media Alert

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Police nab man impersonating utility worker in scam attempt

(April 13, 2013) Detroit --Quick action by the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, DTE Energy and a business energy consumer in Southwest Detroit has led to the arrest and charges for a career criminal.

Carlos Ellis, 55, of Inkster was charged Saturday with five felonies and a misdemeanor after he allegedly masqueraded as a DTE Energy employee and attempted to scam a local business owner. Ellis could face life imprisonment as a habitual offender.

Detroit 36th District Magistrate Millicent Sherman set a \$75,000 cash bond and a preliminary exam on April 25.

Police said Ellis, who is in the Wayne County Jail, offered last Tuesday to fraudulently pay off the DTE Energy account of the business owner to a zero balance, if the owner would pay him half of the account balance. The account balance was \$2,875.

The owner agreed and immediately contacted the Southwest Detroit Business Association for help. The association alerted the Sheriff's Office which partnered with DTE Energy to apprehend Ellis.

DTE Energy supplied the business owner with \$1,400 in cash to give Ellis, who had worn DTE Energy uniform attire when he visited the business. Ellis was arrested by Sheriff's deputies last Wednesday after he collected the money.

Ellis was charged with use of a computer to commit larceny; use of false pretenses to obtain money; identity theft; false personation of a public utility worker and writing a check while having no account. All are felonies with sentences ranging from two to seven years. He also was charged with operating a vehicle with a suspended license.

Ellis has a lengthy criminal record with at least six felony convictions dating back to the 1970s, police said.

"With the help of the public and DTE Energy, a lifelong criminal has been apprehended," said Wayne County Sheriff Benny N. Napoleon. "It only took a day to investigate and make the arrest, which shows how effective law enforcement can be when it receives full cooperation and assistance."

Michael Lynch, chief security officer for DTE Energy, said the utility has seen this type of scam previously.

“Our employees are required to have an ID badge and we encourage people to ask to see their credentials,” said Lynch, who commended the Sheriff’s Office for its quick police work. “And we never take payments in the field.”

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