

Q. Why do we have a 3 week delay on our paychecks in September?

A. The delay is a consequence of the “accelerated payroll” of the first full paycheck. Our pay is divided up into two week pay periods. We receive our paychecks two weeks after the end of the pay period. This is the time it takes to process payroll. As a result, if we started work on the first day of a pay period, we would not receive our first full paycheck until four weeks later.

MCEA members have long expressed frustration with the reality of returning to work in August and having to wait so long for their first full paycheck. As a result, in contract negotiations an agreement was reached to “accelerate” the first full paycheck, so that it arrives one week after the end of the pay period. That way our members get their first full paycheck a week earlier. It costs MCPS extra money to do this, as it requires overtime and weekend work in the payroll office to process the payroll in half the time. It also increases the error rate, as they have less time to verify the accuracy. But because of our members’ desire and need to receive that first full paycheck as soon as possible, MCPS agreed to accelerate the first full paycheck.

The second full paycheck (and all subsequent paychecks) is issued on the regular cycle: two weeks following the end of the pay period. As a result of the first check coming a week early, there is a three week window until receipt of the second full paycheck.

Both MCEA and MCPS would like to replace the current payroll system, which is nearing the end of its useful life. In our recent contract negotiations, agreement was reached that the new payroll system would include an option for 12 month pay. It may also be possible that a new system could allow for a shorter processing period. If the processing window was just one week after the end of the pay period, rather than two weeks, it would eliminate the special acceleration of the first check, and thereby also eliminate the resulting three week gap until the second paycheck. Unfortunately, it is a multi-million dollar project to purchase a new payroll system, and given how tight funding is – there is no firm date for purchasing of a new payroll system. At a time when we can barely get enough funding for salaries and for needed staffing, it is difficult to argue that funding for those essentials should be reduced in order to purchase a new payroll system. At some point in the near future, MCPS’ payroll software system will no longer be supported by the manufacturer, and the county will have no choice but to fund a new system, but there is no date certain at this point.

The following calendars may help illustrate the acceleration.

2014 –
Pay Periods & UNADJUSTED Pay Dates

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
8/4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18 – first day of work	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29
9/1	2	3	4	5 – partial pay check (5 days)
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19 – normal first full paycheck
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	10/1	2	3 – normal date for second full paycheck
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17 – normal date for third full paycheck
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

BLUE = pay periods

RED – pay dates

2014 –
Pay Periods & ACCELERATED Pay Dates

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
8/4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18 – first day of work	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29
9/1	2	3	4	5 – partial pay check (5 days)
8	9	10	11	12 – accelerated first full paycheck
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	10/1	2	3 – normal date for second full paycheck
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17 – normal date for third full paycheck
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

BLUE = pay periods

RED – pay dates