How to handle missed time-clock punches

Q. At our office, if an employee misses a time-clock punch, his pay for that day is suspended until he receives his check stub. The employee must then fill out a missed time-card punch form and have it signed by a senior partner. The missed pay is then applied to the person’s next pay period. Is this legal? — D.L., Virginia

A. If employees fail to punch in or out as required, they should not be required to wait until they receive their next paychecks before clearing up the missing time. Doing so may be illegal because many state labor laws impose limits on how quickly employees must be paid for their hours worked.

Also, making the employee wait serves no legitimate purpose. The more time that passes only increases the likelihood that the employee will forget his hours worked on that particular day, and the supervisor will be less likely to recall whether the reported hours are correct.

The better practice: Inform the employee of the error as soon as it’s identified. You also can discipline employees if they repeatedly forget to punch in or out at the correct time.