



**Paper Fires Entire Accounting Department**  
**Newsroom staffers moved on, but the paychecks kept coming.**

[Stephen Taub](#) and [Dave Cook](#), CFO.com

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The *Chicago Defender*, a venerable weekly newspaper, has fired its entire accounting department after discovering a fraudulent payroll scheme, according to *Editor & Publisher*.

The four-person accounting staff was reportedly terminated for issuing and cashing checks made out to two former newsroom employees over the course of two months.

Though police officers were at the *Defender* offices on Monday, *E&P* noted, a police department spokesman told the paper he not yet seen any paperwork regarding an investigation or arrests.

According to the report, all checks at the *Defender* — "the voice of the African-American Community in Chicago and across the United States" — are issued by parent company Real Times, which also publishes the *Michigan Chronicle*, the *Michigan Front Page*, the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Tri-State Defender*.

"I'm trying to figure how the corporate CFO didn't realize [the former staffers were] no longer with the company," a *Defender* employee told *E&P*. "This is not a large company. There are 12 or 14 people in the newsroom — and maybe 30 in the whole *Chicago Defender*."

Carol E. Bell, listed on the *Chicago Defender* website as executive director of finance, could not immediately be reached for comment. Brit Cox, chief financial officer of Detroit-based Real Times Media, also could not immediately be reached for comment.

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