

ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS ARE A MUST

By Robin Schmidt, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist for Alaska

For years, Social Security has stressed the convenience, security, and safety of getting benefit payments electronically. Soon, direct deposit (or Direct Express) will not only be the best way to receive Federal benefit payments — it will be the only way.

That is because the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced a new rule that will phase out paper checks for Federal benefit and non-tax payments by March 1, 2013.

Here is how the transition will work.

- Anyone applying for Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits on or after May 1, 2011, will receive their payments electronically, while those already receiving paper checks will need to switch to electronic payments by March 1, 2013.
- Anyone already receiving their benefit payments electronically will continue to receive their payment as usual on their payment day.
- People receiving benefits have the option of direct deposit to a bank or credit union account (of their choice) or into a Direct Express[®] Debit MasterCard[®] card account (a Treasury-recommended prepaid card option). You can visit www.GoDirect.org to learn more.
- Social Security, SSI, Veterans Affairs, Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Personnel Management benefits, and other non-tax payments are included.



For most people getting monthly benefits, this will not really be a change; already 8 out of 10 beneficiaries receive payments electronically.

Why the push for electronic payments instead of paper checks received in the mail?

- It's safer: no risk of checks being lost or stolen;
- It's easy and reliable: no need to wait for the mail or go to the bank to cash a check;
- It saves taxpayers money: no cost for postage and paper and printing;
- It saves you money: no check-cashing fees or bank fees; and
- It's good for the environment: it saves paper and eliminates transportation costs.

If you still get your check in the mail, you don't need to wait for the new rule to go into effect to enjoy the benefits of electronic payments. Please visit www.godirect.org today and begin getting your Social Security and SSI payments the safe, easy, inexpensive, and green way — electronically.