

**Private Security Officer
Selection, Training
and Licensing Guidelines**

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**International Association
of Chiefs of Police**

515 N. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/836-6767
Fax: 703-836-4543
www.theiacp.org

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Introduction

For the last decade, the Private-Sector Liaison Committee (PSLC) of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has worked to build lines of communication and cooperation with the private sector. Areas of cooperative efforts have included the development of guidelines and protocols on a variety of issues ranging from product-tampering threat cases to combating violence in the workplace to high-tech crimes.

This document was prepared as a set of guidelines for meaningful security officer standards in the areas of private security and public safety. In the past two decades, the number of non-sworn security officers has grown dramatically. Presently, there are more than twice as many private security officers as there are commissioned police personnel.

Contract security companies employ the largest group of these private security personnel. However, some corporations, colleges or universities, and units of government elect to provide for their own protective services with proprietary security units. This is accomplished either on an exclusive basis or in combination with contract security officers. These guidelines have been drafted to apply to both contract and proprietary security operations. It is understood that individual states may elect to address standards for these two groups differently in such areas as individual licensing, certification or accreditation.

Still, it is intended that initiatives developed from use of these guidelines apply generally to contract and proprietary security officers. In the end, quality assurance for both employee groups is the most critical element for public safety.

These guidelines are not designed to address all aspects of hiring and training security personnel. They are the considered effort of a wide range of professionals from both sectors. As guidelines, they come at a time when growing media and public focus is centered on high-profile events that reflect negatively on security personnel. This unfavorable attention is seldom balanced against the reality that each day hundreds of thousands of security officers provide effective and valued protection to tens of millions of citizens and billions of dollars in assets in a wide range of venues.

Regulatory requirements vary widely in the vast majority of states; and a significant number of states have no uniform state-wide regulation of security services. Although as many as 90 percent of private security personnel are not armed, their uniforms and assignments place them in a wide range of positions which call for the use of authority on the property they protect. To the degree that they protect citizens in public places or work sites, citizens have the right to expect that these employees will be properly screened, hired, trained and supervised. To assist in this effort, these guidelines are offered.

Qualifications and Selection Criteria

All private security officers must meet the applicable statutory requirements and the established criteria of the employer, which may exceed minimum mandated requirements. Federal law mandates that candidates for employment must be citizens or possess legal alien status prior to employment. All applicants who are hired or certified as a private security officer should meet the following minimum criteria:

- A. Be at least 18 years of age—“unarmed” private security officer.
- B. Be at least 21 years of age—“armed” private security officer and comply with U.S. Public Law 104-208 Section 658 (The Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 1997).
- C. Possess a valid state driver’s license (if applicable).
- D. Not have been:
 1. Convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to a felony in any jurisdiction;
 2. Convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, acts of dishonesty or acts against governmental authority, including the use and/or possession of a controlled substance within a seven-year period;
 3. Convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any crime in any jurisdiction involving the sale, delivery, or manufacture of a controlled substance; or
 4. Declared by any court to be incompetent by reason of mental disease or defect that has not been removed or expunged.
- E. Submit two sets of classifiable fingerprints and two passport-sized photographs, along with applicant’s name, address, date of birth, social security number, citizenship status, and a statement of conviction of crimes in order to conduct a state criminal record check, and a FBI criminal history check, prior to permanent employment as a private security officer. In all instances, these actions must be taken prior to the private security officer’s being armed;
- F. Furnish information about all prior employment through the employer making a reasonable effort to verify the last seven years of employment history, and checking three personal references; and
- G. Successfully pass a recognized pre-employment drug screen.

Suggested non-regulated pre-employment applicant criteria include the following:

- A. High School education or equivalent;
- B. Military discharge records (DD 214);
- C. Mental and physical capacity to perform duties for which being employed;
- D. Armed applicants shall successfully complete a relevant psychological evaluation to verify that the applicant is suited for duties for which being employed.

Commentary

There is genuine potential for security employees and police officers or sheriffs’ deputies to be simultaneously involved in an active crime scene. It is for this reason, as well as the need to ensure that private-security personnel are capable of making good decisions in the field, that great care must be exercised in their recruitment and selection.

A second and equally important consideration is that these private-security officers possess high-quality ethical standards since they will be entrusted to safeguard the persons, homes, and businesses of their communities.

Licenses and Certifications

Types of Licenses or Certifications for Private Security Officers

These guidelines establish the following types of license or certification classifications:

- Class I—Security Officer/Unarmed Alarm Responder
- Class II—Armed Security Officer/Armed Alarm Responder
- Class III—Armored Car Security Officer

Temporary Security Officer Permit

1. An employer may issue a temporary security officer permit to a person meeting the qualifications and selection criteria, provided the employer has submitted to the state licensing and certification agency the application required for a registration permit, including the statement from a certified trainer verifying completion of the pre-assignment training requirements.
2. Under no circumstances may the holder of a temporary permit carry a firearm.

Additional Requirements for Class II and Class III Licenses or Certification

In addition to meeting the minimum requirements for a Class I License, an applicant for a Class II and Class III License or Certification shall:

1. Be at least 21 years of age;
2. Submit a statement by a state-recognized firearms instructor verifying that the firearms training and range qualification requirements of these guidelines have been completed;
3. Pass an annual range qualification test as certified by a state-recognized firearms instructor.

License Renewal

Licenses should be renewed every two years.

It is recognized that security officers who have been licensed or issued a permit can commit crimes without their employer or state regulators' knowing of these events. Accordingly, there should exist a procedure that requires regulators to conduct appropriate state and/or national records checks of security personnel at the time of license/permit renewal.

If the person involved has continued to work and reside in the same state, a state records check may well be sufficient. This will reduce the risk that a licensee could commit crimes without the employer or regulatory authority's knowing of them at the time of renewal.

Commentary

One of the more vexing problems associated with licensing, certifying, or registering security officers is the amount of time required. In an industry that has historically experienced high turnover, each processing step needs to be handled with accuracy and timeliness. Failure to streamline each aspect of the selection and approval process has led to instances of abuse of the temporary permit concept. It will be critical for all involved parties from both sectors to cooperate in the shared use of technological advancements that are being implemented at the federal and state levels. This cooperation and coordination are critical to quality assurance being associated with the fielding of security officers in our private facilities and public areas.

Training Considerations

The following are recommended:

- A. Minimum basic training requirements and relevant, continuous in-service training for private security officers should be required. A formal mechanism to establish curriculum requirements and hours of training should be established.
- B. All private security officer training should be reviewed and approved for certification by a state regulatory agency. Instructors will also be certified by the state regulatory agency. All training will be validated by approved testing criteria.
- C. Private security officer basic or in-service training should include the following elements based upon needs analysis related to job function:
 1. Security officers fall into one or more of these categories based upon their job function:
 - a. Unarmed security officers
 - b. Armed security officers
 - c. Unarmed non-sworn alarm responder
 - d. Armed non-sworn alarm responder
 - e. Armored car guard
 2. Security officers' training needs will be addressed in large part under these topic areas as appropriate:
 - a. Legal
 - b. Operational
 - c. Firearms
 - d. Administrative
 - e. Electronic
 - f. Armored transport
 - g. Use of force
- D. Due to the varied nature of security tasks and duties along with the proper training for each, the demands for each specific setting should be assessed for the level of training certification to build public trust and confidence.

Commentary

If there has been any one element of policing that has produced the recognized quality of personal performance by today's officers and deputies, it has been the advent of recognized professional selection/training standards beginning in the early 1970s. This was the cornerstone that has brought policing to being a genuine profession. The same approach can apply to the security officer position. There is every reason to believe that with proper employment screening, coupled with meaningful training and responsible supervision, security officers can earn the respect of communities and law enforcement. If there is anything that will calm those who would be critical, it is the careful administration of statutorily required employment/training standards for all licensed or certified private security officers.

It has been with the welfare of security officers, their employers, and the general public in mind that the above guidelines were developed. The use of these guidelines by all interests having responsibility for or a financial interest in the provision of security officer services can be a foundation from which to draft state legislation or improve existing practices/statutes. An approach that has been helpful in policing in its professional growth has been the use of advisory boards, committees, councils, or commissions. Use of such advisory bodies should be applied in the development/maintenance of security officer standards. Active participation by a wide range of stakeholders also produces the best chances for compliance as well as measurable results. The inclusive spirit of the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies is a proven model for the security industry.

Conclusion

The Private-Sector Liaison Committee, in concert with representatives of the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Association of Security Companies, the National Association of Security and Investigator Regulators and the American Society for Industrial Security, has worked to provide these guidelines. The members of this coalition now hope their production will be both useful for further security industry progress and a point of departure for those states operating without regulation of this important area of protective services.

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Marene N. Allison

Vice President Loss Prevention
Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company

Richard J. Barry

Executive Vice President
First Security Services Corporation

Ernest C. Blount

Vice President, Public Services Division
The Wackenhut Corporation

Michael D. Brasfield

Chief of Police
Fort Lauderdale, FL, Police Department

James L. Brodie

Director Public Safety (Ret.)

James J. Emerson

Lieutenant Colonel
U.S. Marine Corps

Michael D. Gambrill

Vice President of Operations
Dunbar Armored, Inc.

L. Earle Graham

Vice President
Westec Security, Inc.

Hobart M. Henson

Director, National Center State & Local Training
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center

Marvin L. Herrington

Director of Public Safety
Stanford University

S.T. (Steve) Hess

Manager, Police Academy
Justice Institute of British Columbia

Charles Houper

Sheriff
Chemung County, NY, Sheriff's Office

***Weldon L. Kennedy**

Vice Chairman-Group Executive
Guardsmark, Inc.

Michael Martin

Technical Support Specialist/Assistant to Chief of Staff
IACP

Theresa Martin

Captain, Private Security Manager
Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training

Clifford J. Maurer

Manager of Security & Investigations
Carter-Wallace, Inc.

John M. McNamara

Director, Loss Prevention
J.C. Penney Company

#Harlin R. McEwen

Deputy Assistant Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Richard L. Moe

Executive Vice President
The Interpro Group

John A. Nickols

Bureau Chief, Security and Investigation Services
California Department of Consumer Affairs

Edward D. O'Brien

Director, Corporate Security
Champion International Corp.

Roberet L. Ohm

Vice President Eastern Region
Westec Home Security

Bruce Prunk

Assistant Chief
Portland, OR, Police Bureau

Joseph Ricci

Director
American Society for Industrial Security

Thomas M. Seamon

Managing Director, Division of Public Safety
University of Pennsylvania

****Michael G. Shanahan**

Chief of Police (Ret)
University of Washington

Gail M. Simonton

Executive Director & General Counsel
National Association of Security Companies

Katherine P. Spivey

Editorial Assistant/Publications
IACP

Thomas J. Sweeney

Chief of Police
Bridgeport, CT, Police Department

John E. Tomlinson

Deputy Assistant Director
U.S. Secret Service

Harold Wankel

Vice President Patrol Services
Protection One

Thomas W. Wathen

Chairman of the Board
Pinkerton Security and Investigation Services

*Co-Chair, Security Officer Guidelines Sub-Committee

**Co-Chair, Private Sector Liaison Committee

#Special Advisor



International Association of Chiefs of Police

515 N. Washington St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

703/836-6767

Fax: 703-836-4543

www.theiacp.org