

# THE PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY JOB INTERVIEW GUIDE



# 2022 Edition

The Security Officer Network



# The Private Security Job Interview Guide

2022 Edition

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*August 28, 2022*

Dear Reader,

In celebration of its 10th year, The Security Officer Network is pleased to present its first annual Private Security Industry Job Interview Guide.

Over the past 10 years, thousands of officers have utilized The Network to prepare for their career in private security enforcement. This particular publication represents The Network's most recent endeavor to support the industry—with a helpful resource that, like other of The Network's materials, is provided at no cost to the reader.

You are free to copy and share this information with others.

If you have not yet had the opportunity to become a member of The Network, please consider this as your invitation to join us.

Go to [SecurityOfficerNetwork.com](https://SecurityOfficerNetwork.com) and tap "*Create An Account.*"

I look forward to welcoming you to the network.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JW Murphy". The letters are fluid and cursive, with a prominent "J" and "M".

Administrator

The Security Officer Network

Want to capture this publication in print for your permanent records?

The paperback and/or Kindle version of this publication may be ordered online from Amazon. To obtain your copy visit: [securityofficernetwork.com/amazon/interview](https://securityofficernetwork.com/amazon/interview)

The screenshot shows the Amazon product page for the book "The Private Security Industry Job Interview Guide: What You Need to Know to Prepare for Your Security Job Interview (The Professional Security Officer)" by JW Murphey. The page features a product image of the book cover, which shows a security officer in a blue uniform and a yellow vest. The cover text includes "Look inside", "THE PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY JOB INTERVIEW GUIDE", "THE SECURITY OFFICER NETWORK", and "2022 Edition".

The main title is "Private Security Industry Job Interview Guide: What You Need to Know to Prepare for Your Security Job Interview (The Professional Security Officer)". The author is JW Murphey. The format is Kindle Edition. The price is \$0.00 for Kindle Unlimited and \$6.95 for the paperback. The paperback is marked as "1 New from \$6.95".

There are two purchase options: "Read for Free" (via Kindle Unlimited) and "Buy now with 1-Click" (at \$4.95, a \$2.00 discount from the \$6.95 list price). The delivery location is set to "Your Kindle Library".

Below the purchase options, there is a section for "Buy for others" with a "Buy for others" button.

The bottom of the page features a photograph of a blue SUV with "SECURITY" and "SIGNAL" branding, parked in front of a commercial building.



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## State of the Industry: 2022

**T**he private security industry emerged from the lockdowns of 2020 mostly intact. However, in 2021, the labor market shortage cut into the U.S. security providers' margins: security companies were forced to pay more money to their employees in overtime wages. That's an advantage to you, the applicant. Security companies need to hire new officers, cut their overtime costs and restore normal profit margins.







# Security Industry Job Interview Guide

## Knowing Your Security Goal

**S**ecurity officers often fall into the following two broad categories. Which best describes you?

### The Extra-Income Officer

This officer isn't attempting a career in private security or law enforcement. He's just working his way through college; or perhaps he already has a job but needs a second income; or, maybe he's a retiree who just wants to get out of the house. He's best served with an assignment to a low-key post where there's little to do: few security incidents, light interaction with the public and small amounts of paperwork—aside from a basic foot or vehicle patrol log. There are many of these easy posts in the security industry and it's the perfect, easy-going job for those who have other things going on in life and just need to earn money without the stress of a traditional job.

### The Professional Security Officer

This officer is intent on a career as a security professional, such as a security supervisor, security agency owner or a security consultant; or, he's working security as a first step into a law enforcement career. He needs experience and will benefit from an assignment to a post where there's an opportunity for actual security enforcement.

### Why it Matters

Landing a security job is easy. Getting the right security job is a bit more challenging. Security agencies, desperate to put warm bodies in uniforms and on post, don't always make the right assignment. An officer who just wants an easy post, without the stress of dealing with security incidents, won't do well at a post where there's constant activity; and, the future security professional will become frustrated at a post where there's nothing to do.

As you enter into the interview process, think about the type of post for which you are best suited.



## Finding the Right Opening

**Y**ou'll find security industry postings in all of the usual job search locations. However, don't hesitate to contact the companies directly. Search for providers in your town: go to your search engine of choice and enter "security guard service providers in <insert your town here>."

Call each provider, and ask the following:

1. Are you currently hiring?
2. What are the qualifications: Do I need my security license before I can apply? Are the open positions armed or unarmed?
3. What are the specifics of the open assignments: What are the type of posts available and the hours of the shifts? and
4. What does the position pay and what benefits are offered?

Many security agencies are desperate to hire and they shouldn't be offended by your questions; if they are offended or if they refuse to be helpful, then their company culture probably isn't great and you don't want to work for them in the first place. Remember, the industry is desperate for employees so you shouldn't need to settle for working for an agency that has a bad culture.

You'll likely discover most will happily inform you of what you need to know. This allows you to quickly identify the positions for which you are qualified, discover the highest paying openings with the best benefits, and locate the posts that best match your career goals, e.g., an easy post where there's nothing going on, or a busy post with lots of opportunities for gaining experience.



## Preparing for Your Interview

**M**any agencies will ask you to come in straight away to apply and be interviewed. However, before you head down to their office, you will first perform some due diligence.

### Research Your Target

Never go into an interview until first digging up an interesting fact or two about the security agency. During your interview you will work these facts into your answers and impress the interviewer with your knowledge of his agency.

Review their website and social media. Take note of their exceptional characteristics.

Here's an example.

Maybe your target agency has a tendency to acknowledge their officers on social media. When one of their officers goes above and beyond, they make a social media post about it—thanking the officer and giving him kudos. That's pretty neat. Take note of this and, if possible, bring it up in the interview. "I saw your agency's Instagram posts. I was impressed by how you treat your officers. You affirm them when they are professional and when they go above and beyond. That's the type of encouraging culture in which I want to work."

### Understand Your Counterparty

As with all things in life, especially security work, you should put yourself into the mind of your counterparty. What motivates this person and what is he looking to achieve?

In this case your counterparty is the hiring manager.

Let's do our best to get inside of his thought processes.

This person faces a real challenge. Because of the great labor shortage, he's



probably trapped in the never-ending nightmare of trying to keep a full complement of dependable security officers.

Officers frequently call in sick—even when they are perfectly healthy—show up late, or, worse, just don't show up at all. This sends the manager scrambling to find a replacement. The security manager isn't so much a security supervisor as he is a staffing agency coordinator. As societal values continue to decline, it's becoming harder and harder to find dependable, honest, hard-working employees.

Then, even when the officers are showing up on time, they lack professionalism and good judgment. The manager frequently goes on site and finds his security officers scrolling on their phones and not paying attention to the job. The manager needs officers who understand the importance of perception. Officers who constantly scroll on their phones, wear partial or dirty uniforms, get tired of standing and sit down on the curb, or eat or smoke in view of the public, compromise the perception of his security agency.

The manager is first and foremost looking for an employee who will show up on time, look professional, and not embarrass his security agency. It's a low bar—and this is your great opportunity: convince the interviewer of your dependability and professionalism and you've probably got the job, "I will be dependable, show up on time, look and act professional and only call in if I am actually sick."

As an aside, this technique of analyzing the counterparty's motivation is a helpful skill that's used by the truly professional security officer to diffuse difficult situations. If this subject interests you, consider taking The Professional Security Officer course. It's available to members of The Security Officer Network.

## Inventory Your Strengths

What are your personal strengths? You'll need to analyze these and prepare to highlight them during your interview.

Here are some possible examples of strengths that will appeal to many security managers:

You have a flexible schedule and can work any shift, including the overnight shift; or/and you have dependable transportation, are very personally



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disciplined, don't have a lot of drama in your life, and never miss work—unless it's for a very good reason such as sickness;

You are observant and have good recall abilities;

Your writing skills are strong. You are able to adeptly distill a clear, concise and correct description of events into report form;

You have great phone discipline, i.e., you aren't addicted to social media and won't have a problem staying off your phone throughout the security shift—as is necessary. This may seem like a strange job attribute to tout, but, for some security shifts, it's an extremely important discipline to have and your security manager will appreciate your awareness of it; and

You can stand for long periods of time without needing to sit down. As the western world becomes ever more weak and lazy, even the very act of standing for more than a few minutes presents a challenge to much of the workforce. This is a problem in the security industry where some posts require standing and walking for long periods of time. If you can, get good at standing; it's a very basic, but, believe it or not, incredibly useful skill.

## Mitigate Your Weaknesses

Honestly analyze and prepare a clear explanation for each of your weaknesses.

Maybe you've had a bad previous job experience or two. What did you learn from that experience and can you explain it in a positive way without criticizing your previous employer? There's more on this in the next section.

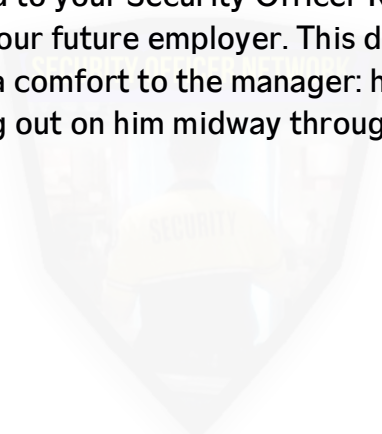
Perhaps there are personal characteristics that compromise your appearance of professionalism: e.g., tattoos and piercings. Though they will never tell you this directly, many hiring managers may factor this into their decision making, "I can't put this guy on my client's site. My client isn't going to respond very well to a pierced-up security guard." Do your best to keep these covered up and not visible.

Maybe you don't have a state security license, or certification, as is required by some states. That's probably not a problem. There are many security openings available to new officers who don't yet have their licenses; the

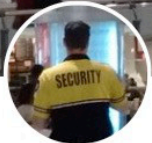
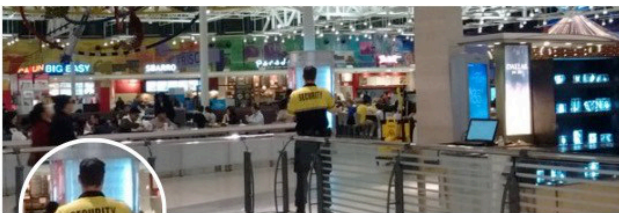


agency will provide or will help the officer find the needed training. But, if you are new to security, and don't have a license or certificate, then consider taking a little time to review The Security Officer Network's free Unarmed Security Prep Guide and the accompanying practice test. Both of these helpful materials are free and their links are found in the Resources section at the back of this publication. These will guide you through the basics of unarmed security, prepare you for your security classes and the license test. They will provide you with knowledge of the best private security practices—before you go in for your interview.

Additionally, if you want to go above and beyond, and if you are a member of The Security Officer Network, consider earning the Network's FEMA IS 101 or HazMat 101 certificates. Instructions are in Appendix A of this book. These certificates will be posted to your Security Officer Network's portfolio page and may be shared with your future employer. This demonstrates your self-motivation and provides a comfort to the manager: he doesn't need to worry about you possibly flaking out on him midway through your security classes.



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Pioneer Square security guard hopes you'll return to the office  
COVID emptied downtown Seattle's offices, leaving one security guard too alone for too long: "It was really depressing."

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## The Interview

**F**or the purposes of illustration, let's assume that your research has located a job opportunity with ABC Security.

"We are hiring! Come on in, fill out an application and our hiring manager will give you an interview."

If your appointment with ABC Security is scheduled for a set time, show up 15 minutes early and dress professionally; don't over dress, but dress nice.

If you've yet to fill out the job application, take your time and fill it out correctly. Return your application to the person manning the front desk. She will likely instruct you to stand by as she notifies the hiring manager that you've completed your application and are ready to speak with him.

The front-desk person will take your application to the manager, and then, as he reviews it, she will have a few minutes to observe your conduct while you wait.

As you wait, assume that you are under observation. The front-desk person may be scoring your appearance of professionalism—or lack thereof.

Avoid scrolling through social media. The repetitious swiping action of scrolling is decidedly noticeable to even the most casual of observers and is an indication that you might have a social media addiction and won't be able to stop swiping, even while on the job; or, worse, you might be one of those officers who compromises company image and site security by posting from your security site.

Try to stay off of the phone altogether. Don't make phone calls to family members, especially not those that are heated or emotional. Avoid engaging in long, back-and-forth text conversations. These are the warning signs of personal drama. Those who live in and thrive on constant personal drama often bring that drama into the workplace. This impacts not only their job performance, but those around them. The hiring manager can't risk hiring someone who spreads drama and runs the risk of spoiling the morale and professionalism of an entire site.





And don't step outside to smoke. This is a big deal. Smoking, or vaping, is a coping mechanism for dealing with the stress of an interview. The former creates a lingering odor that potentially casts doubt on your professionalism and creates a headache for the company: "This guy would make the security car smell like smoke." The latter, though odorless, will also raise doubts: "This officer might have a constant need to vape and that's a security liability." Worse, because of discrimination laws, the hiring manager might be afraid to ask you about your need to smoke, so he will probably just assume that you will be constantly smoking on the job and that means you won't even have the chance to defend yourself.

Instead, if the office has magazines or other reading material, leaf through them. Or, bring a notepad, book or some other non-electronic means of keeping yourself occupied while awaiting your interview.

## The Interview

Once admitted to the hiring manager's office, make eye contact, thank the manager for considering you for the job and confidently, honestly answer his questions.

Here are some of the questions you might be asked.

### What is your security experience?

Don't oversell your experience. You really don't need to. Remember, we've analyzed our counterparty and we know that he's desperate to hire. That's our advantage. He's probably going to hire you, even if you do not have experience. Even if you have yet to obtain a state security license or certificate, perhaps you have earned a Security Officer Network training certificate, or two. If so, this is your chance to demonstrate your self-motivation: "I haven't yet obtained my state license, but I have been studying, and I have earned Security Officer Network certificates."

This should impress the manager: "Wow, this applicant is self-motivated!"

Or, maybe you are at the opposite end of the experience spectrum: you have been in the security industry for several years, perhaps you were a supervisor at your previous security job, and you want to impress with your knowledge. That's fine, but be careful. There's some danger here: don't try too hard.



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There are many arrogant "security supervisors" in the private security industry. The discerning manager doesn't want to hire an arrogant know-it-all. Simply state your experience, but don't elaborate, or talk too long. And, acknowledge that you want to learn more and desire to continue growing as a security professional. Too many of the arrogant officers seem to believe they already know everything there is to know; the wise manager will avoid hiring this person.

**What are your strengths or, what makes you a good fit for this job?**

Here's your chance to share your strengths' inventory.

Examples include:

I am dependable, you won't need to worry about me calling in, unless I am sick or there is a really good reason;

I am defined by my professionalism. I want everyone to have confidence in my ability to do my job, and I will do whatever I can to maintain that image for myself, and for your security agency; and

My schedule is flexible. I can work any shift, at any time of day.

Notice how these answers are short and direct. Don't oversell. Just make direct eye contact with the interviewer, and confidently highlight what you know he wants to hear: you are going to help him get his shifts covered, show up on time, and conduct yourself as a true professional.

Of course, perhaps your schedule isn't flexible, maybe you are just looking for part-time, weekend, extra money shifts. That's fine too, honestly explain this to the manager.

You may choose to elaborate just a little bit on each of your strengths so as to include your specific abilities. For example, as you describe your professionalism, you might add that:

"I have the ability to stand for hours at a time. If you assign me to a post where standing is required, you won't need to worry about me sitting down on a curb or in some other not-so-professional stance;"



Or,

"I have good phone discipline. You won't catch me scrolling social media or posting photos from the workplace."

These added details, briefly described, demonstrate that you've thought about the concept of professionalism, truly understand what it means, and are capable of translating it into specific action.

For more ideas on professional conduct in the security industry, members of The Security Officer Network should see the course, The Professional Security Officer.

## **What type of work are you looking for?**

Be honest. Remember, it's your goal to get an assignment that best matches your needs. If you want an easy post, let your interviewer know. If you want a post where you can more quickly grow your security enforcement skills, let them know that too.

## **Tell me about your past employment experiences.**

Succinctly describe your past employment experiences and throw in a specific item or two that you learned while employed with those employers.

"I spent two years at Securitas. I worked the 2nd shift at a downtown corporate tower. I enforced access policies, conducted interior and exterior site patrols and learned to monitor the building's HVAC and fire suppression equipment."

Maybe you have a bad past employment experience or two.

Explain this experience through the best, most-positive perspective possible:

"It didn't work out. I've thoughtfully examined why and have learned from the experience. I am going to be a better person and a better employee because of it."

Most managers will probably accept this explanation; but, be prepared for a follow-up question: "What did you learn from that experience?"

Here's an example answer to his question: "I allowed myself to become



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involved in a personality conflict with my direct supervisor. This wasn't productive and I am determined to not let that happen again."

Never, ever, talk badly about a previous employer or blame them for the bad experience. Remember, the hiring manager has probably been through his own share of bad employment experiences—from the employer's point of view—and he may instinctively sympathize with the previous employer: "If I hire this person, he probably won't work out here either, and then he will go to my competitor and talk about my company just as he is currently doing about his previous employer."

Avoid gossip and the sharing of specific details about the sites, personnel or operations of previous employers. This might convince the manager that you are one of the "itinerant" security officers who goes from company to company spreading gossip. Wise managers avoid hiring these officers. They don't want you learning their agency's sensitive details and then quickly quitting and taking this information along with you to your next employer—their competitor!

Maybe this is your first time interviewing for a security job and you do not have any previous security experience. That's actually a potential strength. An astute manager will realize the importance of this fact: you haven't picked up any of the bad habits that are so destructive to a security officer's professionalism and which infect many of the big security companies.

But, you should still do your best to relate your past experiences and skills to the security industry. Maybe you worked in retail; that's perfect! You were on the front line of the retail theft epidemic and probably have some loss prevention insights from the point of view of the store employee. These insights and your experience make you a perfect candidate for assignments to a retail site or really any site that requires observation skills.

Pretty much any previous work experience, even if it wasn't a security job, has provided you with useful security industry skills. It's your challenge to connect the dots and briefly explain this to the manager.

"I don't have direct security industry experience. But, when I worked for Walmart, I became familiar with the emergency incident protocols and I worked with our in-house loss prevention team to help prevent retail theft."



Or, even if you can't find a direct connection to security enforcement policy, remember, the manager's biggest headache is just finding someone who will show up at work. So, this statement will really appeal to him: "In the two years I worked at Walmart, I only had to call in twice, both times because I was sick. Other than that, I had perfect attendance."

## Can you start tonight?

Be prepared for this one. Remember, the hiring manager is probably a desperate fellow. He needs to cover shifts, ASAP! He's ready to get you in a uniform and on post.

There's no right or wrong answer to this question, but you need to be prepared for it and have a direct, honest answer ready to go.

If you are uncomfortable with it, or are unable to make this commitment, that's okay. If the manager is ready to put you to work straight away, then he probably won't have a problem putting you to work in a few days.

Here's a possible answer, "I need a couple of days to get my sleep schedule lined up before working the night shift. I want to be 100% focused on the job."

Additionally, you might be waiting on a higher-paying offer from another security agency with whom you have already interviewed. Don't be afraid to explain this to the manager. Remember, there are always openings in the private security industry, and more likely than not, he will have another opening available for you, if you do not receive an offer from the higher-paying agency.

Of course, there's also a chance that he might just match the other agency's offer on the spot: "You don't need to wait on them. I will pay you the same wage."



## The Checklist

**A**s you leave the interview, thank the manager for his consideration. Also, politely acknowledge and thank the front-desk person before exiting the office. This demonstrates true professionalism and could easily score you an extra point or two. Never underestimate the role of the front-desk person in swaying a close decision.

Now, having left the office, you won't be able to see what happens next.

But, let's take a guess: the hiring manager turns to his computer and pulls up a spreadsheet entitled, "Hiring Scorecard." With the interview still fresh in his memory, and his immediate gut instinct guiding his thought process, he wants to immediately score the interview.

Let's take a quick peek at his document.

Was the applicant on time? (5 points )

Did the applicant convey a sense of self-motivation and willingness to learn? (10 points )

Does the applicant have either direct experience in the security industry or comparable experience in some other industry? (10 points )

Does the applicant convey a sense of professionalism and/or an understanding of what is professional and what is not? (15 points )

Will this applicant be dependable and show up to work? (15 points )

Notice the priorities of this manager's scorecard: he awards points to the applicant who has experience, but he's far more interested in finding the applicant who will show up to work and maintain professional appearance, regardless of past experience.

### What's Next

Okay, so you've been hired—congratulations! Welcome to your security career. Now, let's take it to the next level.



If you aspire to become a security professional, you probably aren't content to remain a basic, unarmed security officer working at a low-paid post.

Consider joining The Security Officer Network and take the course entitled The Professional Security Officer. It prepares you to avoid the bad habits that trap many new security officers and encourages you to develop a roadmap to true security professionalism. This is essential learning for those new officers who want to have a career in private security or desire to leverage their private security experience into a law enforcement career.





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## How You Can Help

It's hoped that you have found this guide to be helpful.

Your follow-up and input would be appreciated.

Did this guide adequately prepare you for the questions you experienced in your interview?

What were some of the questions asked to you?

What could have been provided to better prepare you for the interview?

Please submit your input and suggestions to [help.desk@securityofficernetwork.com](mailto:help.desk@securityofficernetwork.com) with the subject line of, "Feedback on Job Interview Guide."

Your suggestions will assist the future readers of this guide.





## Resources

The Security Officer Network: <https://www.SecurityOfficerNetwork.com>

The Security Officer Network's Unarmed Security Prep Guide: <https://securityofficerhq.com/book/security-exam-prep>

The Security Officer Network's Practice Test: <https://securityofficerhq.com/test>





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## Reference

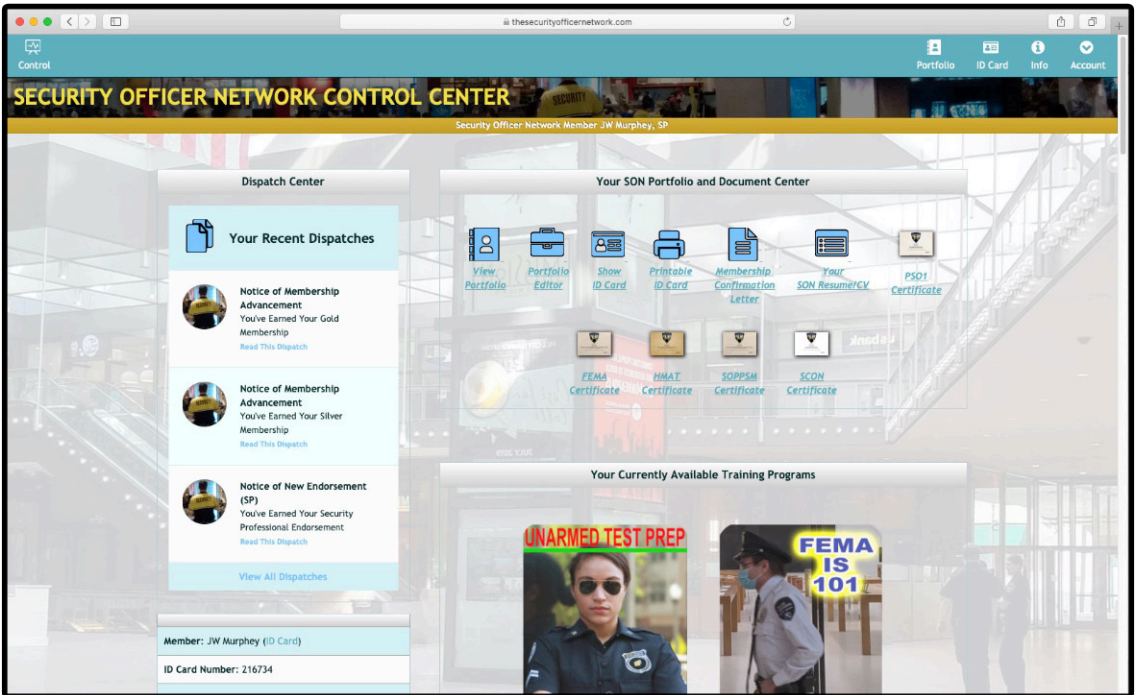
State of the Industry: Perry, Robert H. US Contract Security Industry White Paper. Robert H. Perry, 2021.





## Appendix A

# Instructions for Obtaining Security Officer Network Certificates



Step 1: Visit [SecurityOfficerNetwork.com](https://SecurityOfficerNetwork.com).

Step 2: Sign in to your account.

Step 3: New members are provided immediate access to The Network's FEMA 101 online training course. Complete this course. The certificate from the course will automatically appear on your Security Officer Network (SON) profile page and your official SON transcript/resume.

Step 4: From your Network control panel, access, download and print out your SON Resume. You may attach this resume to your job applications.

Step 5: After 30 days your membership will be upgraded to bronze level and, at that time, you will be able to access additional training courses including



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HazMat 101 and The Professional Security Officer.

Hint: Don't want to wait 30 days to access the additional courses? You can achieve bronze level immediately by importing your Unarmed Security Practice Test Certificate. You can earn the certificate from [securityofficerhq.com/test](https://securityofficerhq.com/test). Upon completing the certificate, you will receive instructions on how to import it into your Security Officer Network account. This certificate will appear on your portfolio and resume.

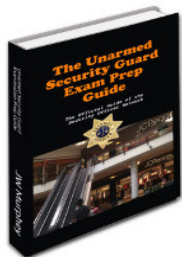




# The Security Officer Network

## Catalog of Resources

### The Unarmed Security Exam Prep Guide



**E**ach month hundreds of visitors navigate to The Security Officer Network to get answers to their security questions. Many need to pass the unarmed security exam and as a public service to the industry, the Network now offers a free PDF of the 2nd edition of this guide.

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Audio Book From Audible (*Free with Audible Trial*): [securityofficernetwork.com/audio/unarmedprep](http://securityofficernetwork.com/audio/unarmedprep)

**FREE!**

### The Unarmed Security Free Practice Test

The Web's Best Private Security Practice Test

**U**talized by hundreds of security officers, this is the ideal tool for preparing for a state or company-issued unarmed security exam. Test takers are provided with customized feedback designed to improve their score.

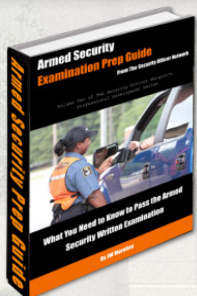


[securityofficernetwork.com/resources/test](http://securityofficernetwork.com/resources/test)

### Armed Security Exam Prep Guide

Your Guide to Passing the Armed Guard Written Test

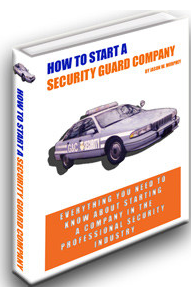
**T**he Armed Security Prep Guide assists test takers with many of the commonly asked questions from the armed security written exam. It includes access to the Armed Security Practice Test using The Security Officer Network's SOPAS testing engine.



PDF: [securityofficernetwork.com/pdf/armed](http://securityofficernetwork.com/pdf/armed)

Paperback/Kindle: [securityofficernetwork.com/amazon/armedprep](http://securityofficernetwork.com/amazon/armedprep)

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## How to Start a Security Guard Company

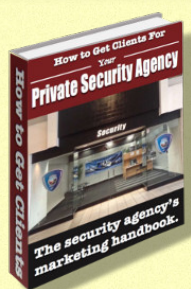
**S**ince its release in 2012, this book has been downloaded thousands of times and is one of the most popular and in-depth resources for those who are serious about owning and managing their own security agency. Updated in December of 2017 it's now in its 4th edition.

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## The Private Security Job Interview Guide

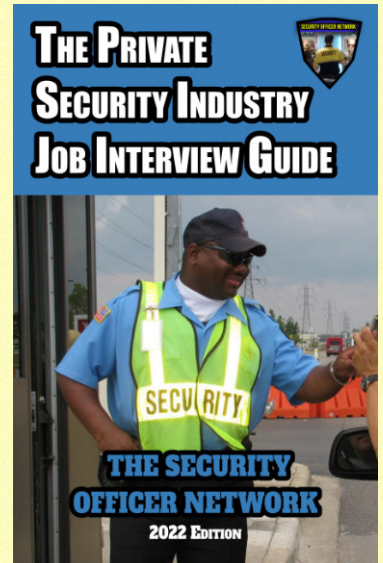
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