



# FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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The following information relates to the topic of law enforcement wages and was taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010 – 11 Edition:

Federal Law Enforcement. *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents* are the Government's principal investigators, responsible for investigating violations of more than 200 categories of Federal law and conducting sensitive national security investigations. Agents may conduct surveillance, monitor court-authorized wiretaps, examine business records, investigate white-collar crime, or participate in sensitive undercover assignments. The FBI investigates a wide range of criminal activity, including organized crime, public corruption, financial crime, bank robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, espionage, drug trafficking, and cybercrime.

There are many other Federal agencies that enforce particular types of laws. *U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents* enforce laws and regulations relating to illegal drugs. *U.S. marshals and deputy marshals* provide security for the Federal courts and ensure the effective operation of the judicial system. *Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives agents* enforce and investigate violations of Federal firearms and explosives laws, as well as Federal alcohol and tobacco tax regulations. The U.S. Department of State *Bureau of Diplomatic Security special agents* are engaged in the battle against terrorism.

The *Department of Homeland Security* also employs numerous law enforcement officers within several different agencies, including Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Secret Service. *U.S. Border Patrol agents* protect more than 8,000 miles of international land and water boundaries. *Immigration inspectors* interview and examine people seeking entry into the United States and its territories. *Customs inspectors* enforce laws governing imports and exports by inspecting cargo, baggage, and articles worn or carried by people, vessels, vehicles, trains, and aircraft entering or leaving the United States. *Federal Air Marshals* provide air security by guarding against attacks targeting U.S. aircraft, passengers, and crews. *U.S. Secret Service special agents* and *U.S. Secret Service uniformed officers* protect the President, the Vice President, their immediate families, and other public officials. Secret Service special agents also investigate counterfeiting, forgery of Government checks or bonds, and fraudulent use of credit cards.

Other Federal agencies employ police and special agents with sworn arrest powers and the authority to carry firearms. These agencies include the Postal Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Law Enforcement, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service.

Work environment. Police and detective work can be very dangerous and stressful. Police officers and detectives have one of the highest rates of on-the-job injury and illness. In addition to the obvious dangers of

confrontations with criminals, police officers and detectives need to be constantly alert and ready to deal appropriately with a number of other threatening situations. Many law enforcement officers witness death and suffering resulting from accidents and criminal behavior. A career in law enforcement may take a toll on their private lives.

Uniformed officers, detectives, agents, and inspectors usually are scheduled to work 40-hour weeks, but paid overtime is common. Shift work is necessary because protection must be provided around the clock. Junior officers frequently work weekends, holidays, and nights. Police officers and detectives are required to work whenever they are needed and may work long hours during investigations. Officers in most jurisdictions, whether on or off duty, are expected to be armed and to exercise their authority when necessary.

The jobs of some Federal agents, such as U.S. Secret Service and DEA special agents, require extensive travel, often on very short notice. These agents may relocate a number of times over the course of their careers. Some special agents, such as those in the U.S. Border Patrol, may work outdoors in rugged terrain and in all kinds of weather.

*Federal agencies* require a bachelor's degree, related work experience, or a combination of the two. Federal law enforcement agents undergo extensive training, usually at the U.S. Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia, or the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. The specific educational requirements, qualifications, and training information for a particular Federal agency can be found on its Web site. Many of these agencies are listed as sources of additional information at the end of this statement.

To be considered for appointment as an FBI agent, an applicant must be a college graduate and have at least 3 years of professional work experience or must have an advanced degree plus 2 years of professional work experience. An applicant who meets these criteria also must have one of the following: a college major in accounting, electrical engineering, information technology, or computer science; fluency in a foreign language; a degree from an accredited law school; or 3 years of related full-time work experience. All new FBI agents undergo 18 weeks of training at the FBI Academy on the U.S. Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia.

Other qualifications. Civil service regulations govern the appointment of police and detectives in most States, large municipalities, and special police agencies, as well as in many smaller jurisdictions. Candidates must be U.S. citizens, usually must be at least 21 years old, and must meet rigorous physical and personal qualifications. Physical examinations for entry into law enforcement often include tests of vision, hearing, strength, and agility. Eligibility for appointment usually depends on one's performance in competitive written examinations and previous education and experience.

Candidates should enjoy working with people and meeting the public. Because personal characteristics such as honesty, sound judgment, integrity, and a sense of responsibility are especially important in law enforcement, candidates are interviewed by senior officers and their character traits and backgrounds are investigated. A history of domestic violence may disqualify a candidate. In some agencies, candidates are interviewed by a psychiatrist or a psychologist or given a personality test. Most applicants are subjected to lie detector examinations or drug testing. Some agencies subject sworn personnel to random drug testing as a condition of continuing employment.

Although similar in nature, the requirements for Federal agents are generally more stringent and the background checks are more thorough. There are polygraph tests as well as interviews with references. Jobs that require security clearances have additional requirements.

**Advancement.** Police officers usually become eligible for promotion after a probationary period ranging from 6 months to 3 years. In large departments, promotion may enable an officer to become a detective or to specialize in one type of police work, such as working with juveniles. Promotions to corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, and captain usually are made according to a candidate's position on a promotion list, as determined by scores on a written examination and on-the-job performance.

Federal agents often are on the General Services (GS) pay scale. Most begin at the GS-5 or GS-7 level. As agents meet time-in-grade and knowledge and skills requirements, they move up the GS scale. Promotions at and above GS-13 are most often managerial positions. Many agencies hire internally for these supervisory positions. A few agents may be able to enter the Senior Executive Series ranks of upper management.

Continuing training helps police officers, detectives, and special agents improve their job performance. Through police department academies, regional centers for public safety employees established by the States, and Federal agency training centers, instructors provide annual training in self-defense tactics, firearms, use-of-force policies, sensitivity and communications skills, crowd-control techniques, relevant legal developments, and advances in law enforcement equipment.

In May 2008, median annual wages of detectives and criminal investigators were \$60,910. The middle 50 percent earned between \$45,930 and \$81,490. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$36,500, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$97,870. Median annual wages were \$73,170 in Federal Government, \$53,910 in State government, and \$55,930 in local government.

Federal law provides special salary rates to Federal employees who serve in law enforcement. Additionally, Federal special agents and inspectors receive law enforcement availability pay (LEAP)—equal to 25 percent of the agent's grade and step—awarded because of the large amount of overtime that these agents are expected to work. Salaries were slightly higher in selected areas where the prevailing local pay level was higher.

#### **Private Investigators (nongovernment):**

*Private detectives and investigators* assist individuals, businesses, and attorneys by finding and analyzing information. They connect clues to uncover facts about legal, financial, or personal matters. Private detectives and investigators offer many services, including executive, corporate, and celebrity protection; preemployment verification; and individual background profiles. Some investigate computer crimes, such as identity theft, harassing e-mails, and illegal downloading of copyrighted material. They also provide assistance in criminal and civil liability cases, insurance claims and fraud cases, child custody and protection cases, missing-persons cases, and premarital screening. They are sometimes hired to investigate individuals to prove or disprove infidelity.

Private detectives and investigators may use many methods to determine the facts in a case. Much of their work is done with a computer. For example, they often recover deleted e-mails and documents. They also may perform computer database searches or work with someone who does. Computers allow

investigators to quickly obtain huge amounts of information, such as records of a subject's prior arrests, convictions, and civil legal judgments; telephone numbers; information about motor vehicle registrations; records of association and club memberships; social networking site details; and even photographs.

Detectives and investigators also perform various other types of surveillance or searches. To verify facts, such as an individual's income or place of employment, they may make phone calls or visit a subject's workplace. In other cases, especially those involving missing persons and background checks, investigators interview people to gather as much information as possible about an individual. Sometimes investigators go undercover, pretending to be someone else in order to get information or to observe a subject inconspicuously. They even arrange to be hired in businesses to observe workers for wrongdoing.

Most detectives and investigators are trained to perform physical surveillance, which may be high tech or low tech. They may observe a site, such as the home of a subject, from an inconspicuous location or a vehicle. Using photographic and video cameras, binoculars, cell phones, and GPS systems, detectives gather information on an individual. Surveillance can be time consuming.

The duties of private detectives and investigators depend on the needs of their clients. In cases that involve fraudulent workers' compensation claims, for example, investigators may carry out long-term covert observation of a person suspected of fraud. If an investigator observes the person performing an activity that contradicts injuries stated in a worker's compensation claim, the investigator would take video or still photographs to document the activity and report it to the client.

Detectives and investigators must be mindful of the law in conducting investigations. They keep up with Federal, State, and local legislation, such as privacy laws and other legal issues affecting their work. The legality of certain methods may be unclear, and investigators and detectives must make judgment calls in deciding how to pursue a case. They must also know how to collect evidence properly so that they do not compromise its admissibility in court.

Private detectives and investigators often specialize. Those who focus on intellectual property theft, for example, investigate and document acts of piracy, help clients stop illegal activity, and provide intelligence for prosecution and civil action. Other investigators specialize in developing financial profiles and carrying out asset searches. Their reports reflect information gathered through interviews, investigation and surveillance, and research, including reviews of public documents.

*Computer forensic investigators* specialize in recovering, analyzing, and presenting data from computers for use in investigations or as evidence. They determine the details of intrusions into

computer systems, recover data from encrypted or erased files, and recover e-mails and deleted passwords.

*Legal investigators* assist in preparing criminal defenses, locating witnesses, serving legal documents, interviewing police and prospective witnesses, and gathering and reviewing evidence. Legal investigators also may collect information on the parties to a litigation, take photographs, testify in court, and assemble evidence and reports for trials. They often work for law firms or lawyers.

*Corporate investigators* conduct internal and external investigations for corporations. In internal investigations, they may investigate drug use in the workplace, ensure that expense accounts are not abused, or determine whether employees are stealing assets, merchandise, or information. External investigations attempt to thwart criminal schemes from outside the corporation, such as fraudulent billing by a supplier. Investigators may spend months posing as employees of the company in order to find misconduct.

*Financial investigators* may be hired to develop confidential financial profiles of individuals or companies that are prospective parties to large financial transactions. These investigators often are certified public accountants (CPAs) who work closely with investment bankers and other accountants. They also might search for assets in order to recover damages awarded by a court in fraud or theft cases.

Detectives who work for retail stores or hotels are responsible for controlling losses and protecting assets. *Store detectives*, also known as *loss prevention agents*, safeguard the assets of retail stores by apprehending anyone attempting to steal merchandise or destroy store property. They prevent theft by shoplifters, vendor representatives, delivery personnel, and store employees. Store detectives also conduct periodic inspections of stock areas, dressing rooms, and rest rooms, and sometimes assist in opening and closing the store. They may prepare loss prevention and security reports for management and testify in court against people they apprehend. *Hotel detectives* protect guests of the establishment from theft of their belongings and preserve order in hotel restaurants and bars. They also may keep undesirable individuals, such as known thieves, off the premises.

#### Private Investigator Wages:

Median annual wages of salaried private detectives and investigators were \$41,760 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$30,870 and \$59,060. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$23,500, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$76,640. Wages of private detectives and investigators vary greatly by employer, specialty, and geographic area.

#### Insurance Investigator Wages:

Median annual wages of wage and salary claims adjusters, examiners, and investigators were \$55,760 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$42,400 and \$70,860. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$34,140, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$84,260.