



WHITE PAPER

Security Officer Training Requirements

An overview and analysis of state training requirements for private security officers

June 2021

This paper was produced for NASCO by the Center for Private Security and Safety at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice under the direction of Chair & Professor Charles P. Nemeth.

Summary

This paper provides an overview of individual entry-level security officer training requirements based on state statutes and regulations governing the private security industry. The major findings are below.

- Distinguishing between armed and unarmed status, no two states' requirements are alike.
- Unarmed training requirements with specific hours are mandated in 28 states.
- Armed training requirements with specific hours are mandated in 28 states, but only 23 of these states also have unarmed training requirements with specific hours.
- On average, armed security officers must complete approximately twice as many hours of training as unarmed security officers.
- For unarmed security officers, completing training after starting employment is at least partially permitted in 45% of states that require unarmed training, while for the armed status all states require the completion of training prior to performing armed security officer duties.
- Approximately 72% of states that require armed refresher training require it annually.



Purpose and Questions

This white paper provides an overview of security officer training requirements as per state statutes, regulations and licensing agencies. The focus of this paper identifies entry-level employees of contract security agencies performing the duties of armed and unarmed security officer positions. This analysis answers the following questions and differentiates between the armed and unarmed security officer status.

- How many hours of initial training are required per state?
- When is mandatory training required?
- How many hours of refresher training are required?
- What is the timing of the refresher training?

Methods

This analysis is based on private security statutes and regulations in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All information was obtained from the applicable statutes and administrative rules published on the official state and licensing websites and contained in the NASCO State Security Officer Licensing Database. The information presented here is up to date as of June 2021.

The following variables were collected for armed and unarmed designations respectively:

- *Initial training hours*, refers to the number of training hours that an applicant seeking employment as an armed/unarmed security officer must complete in order to lawfully perform security duties.
- *Initial training time*, specifies when the applicant must complete the initial training requirements during the hiring process.
- *Refresher training hours*, describes the hours of continuing education required to maintain the status of an armed or unarmed security officer.
- *Refresher training timing*, specifies the time intervals in which the refresher training must be completed, either annually, biennially, triennially, or other.

Please see an overview of the data collected for this analysis in the Appendix in Table A.



Results

This section presents the results of the data collection for initial minimum training hours and timing, and refresher training and timing. Before delving into an examination of hourly training requirements, it is necessary to first identify the states that require training. Foremost, ten states do not have any statutes governing the private security industry.¹ Although in these states some municipalities regulate private security on a local level, this research focuses on state statutes and thus, excludes these states from this analysis. Further, training requirements are different depending on the armed and unarmed status. The following sections therefore, elaborate the training for each designation respectively.

Unarmed Training

Ten states regulate the private security industry but the governing statute is silent on training requirements for unarmed employees.² An additional three states, Nevada, Texas, and West Virginia, require training for unarmed security officers without specifying the hourly duration of such training. In Nevada, the rules call for an examination the applicant must pass prior to registration.³ Hereby, it is the responsibility of the employer or licensee to administer the exam and provide training as deemed necessary. In a similar approach, West Virginia also delegates training responsibilities to the supervising licensee without outlining any explicit provisions;⁴ Discretion on content, duration, and scope of training lies here exclusively with the employing agency. Texas contrasts this approach as the discretion lies not with the employing but with the licensing agency: While the rules demand an unarmed applicant to complete a 'Level II' training course, the licensing agency, the Department of Public Safety, approves the scope and extent of the course.⁵ Hence, despite lacking an hourly condition, the licensing agency oversees and regulates the unarmed training curriculum.⁶ Overall, a total of 28 out of 51 states (55%) outline specific hourly training requirements for unarmed security officer employees in their statutes. Figure 1 depicts these category distinctions.

¹ States without legislation: Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

² States with legislation silent on individual unarmed training: Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.

³ See: NAC 648.341

⁴ See: W. Va. Code § 30-18-7(a)

⁵ See: TAC § 35.141

⁶ Delaware and Oklahoma take a similar approach in that training hours are not specified in the rules, but a curriculum is. The specific training hours for the curriculum are listed on the websites of the licensing agencies.



Unarmed Training Requirements

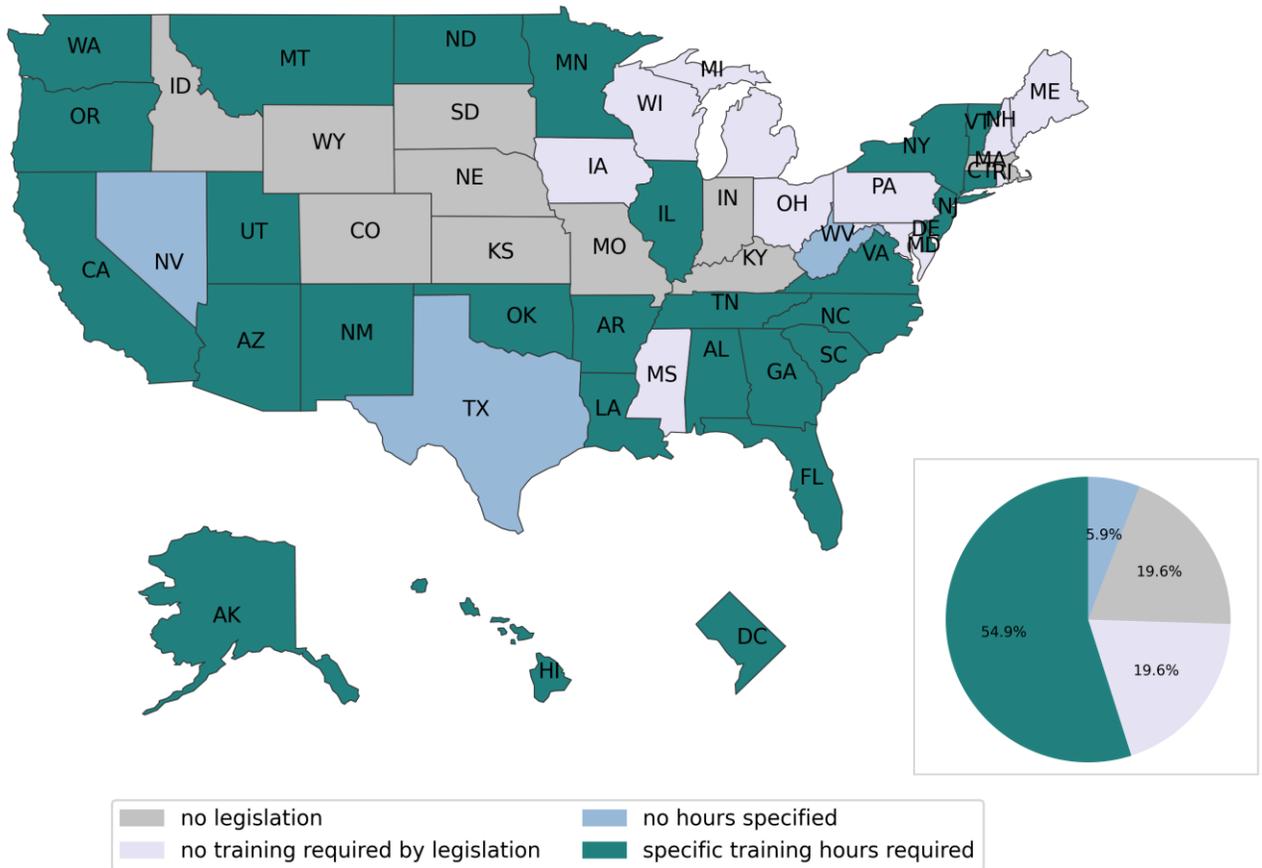


Figure 1: Unarmed requirements

Armed Training

A total of 28 states also require specific training hours for armed security officers. However, only 23 of these states also have unarmed training requirements with specific hours. This discrepancy stems from the connection between armed and unarmed status. In states where only businesses are licensed, the hiring, vetting, and training processes of employees are the responsibilities of the licensed employer, regardless of the armed/unarmed designation. Rather than distinguishing the designation through different forms of licensure, these states define the armed status through compliance with the state's handgun laws. Specifically, this



applies to six states that require armed employees to obtain a state permit.⁷ Although, training in connection with a state permit may be required, such training is not explicitly related to the security profession and falls outside the authority of the institution regulating private security, so it will be excluded from this analysis.⁸ In addition, two states, Maine and Michigan, have no training requirements for armed security officers and do not require a state handgun permit.⁹ Further, five states require training for armed security officers without specifying an hourly training requirement.¹⁰ See Figure 2.

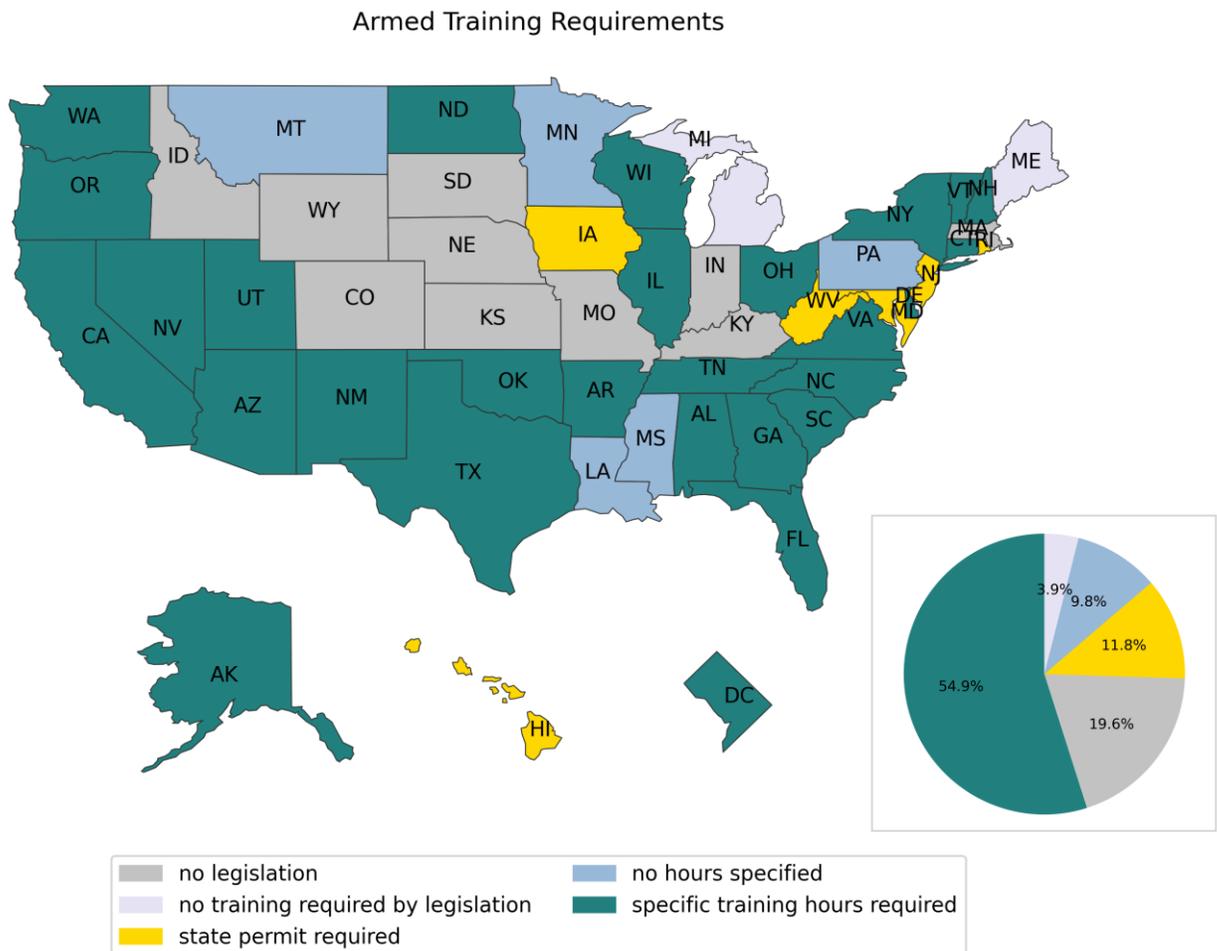


Figure 2: Armed requirements

⁸ Maryland is an exception to this as the State Police licenses both private security and firearm permits. However, different divisions within the State Police are responsible for the respective licensure.

⁹ Maine does not regulate handguns at all, while Michigan does not require a permit for Open Carry.

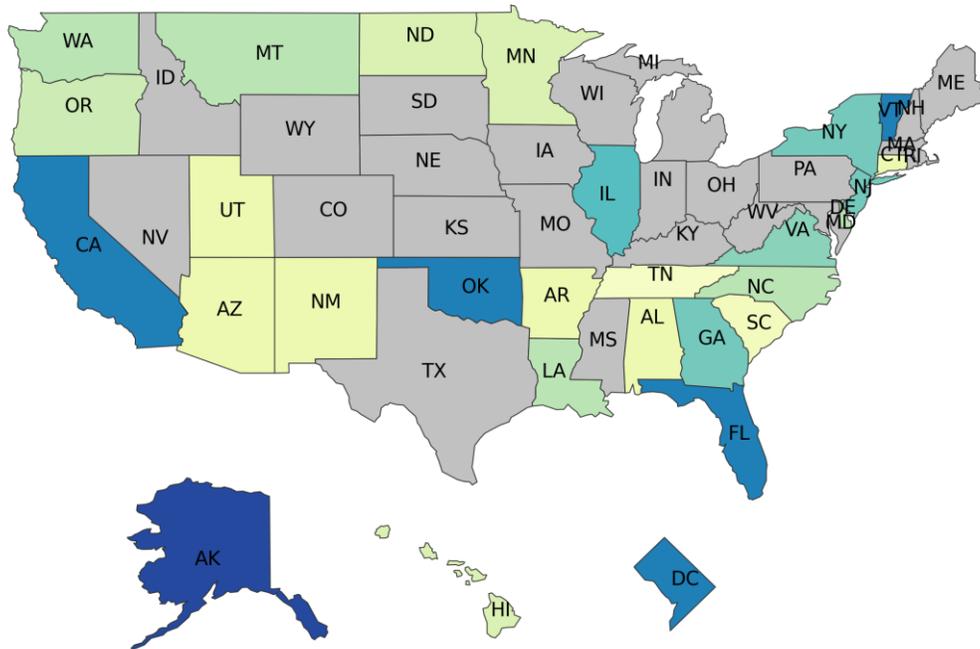
¹⁰ States that require training without an hourly requirement: Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, and Pennsylvania.



Initial Hourly Training Requirements

The hourly training requirement for unarmed security officers ranges from four to 48 hours, with an average of 20 hours and median of 16 hours. See Figure 3.

Number of Initial Unarmed Training Hours Required

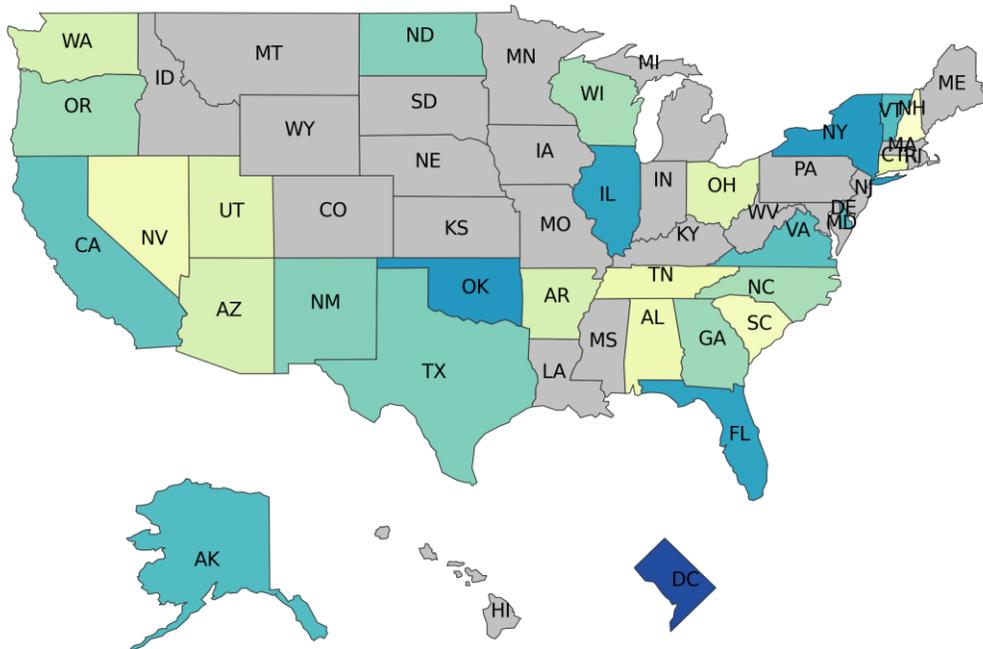


| State | Hours | State | Hours | State | Hours |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| TN | 4 | HI | 12 | VA | 22 |
| SC | 6 | MN | 12 | GA | 24 |
| AL | 8 | ND | 12 | NJ | 24 |
| AZ | 8 | OR | 14 | NY | 24 |
| AR | 8 | DE | 16 | IL | 28 |
| CT | 8 | LA | 16 | CA | 40 |
| NM | 8 | MT | 16 | DC | 40 |
| UT | 8 | NC | 16 | FL | 40 |
| | | WA | 16 | OK | 40 |
| | | | | VT | 40 |
| | | | | AK | 48 |



In contrast, armed training hours range from four to 96 hours, with an average of 40 hours and median of 38 hours. These hours include the unarmed training if required, as the armed status is usually an extension of the unarmed status. See Figure 4.

Number of Initial Armed Training Hours Required



| State | Hours | State | Hours | State | Hours |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| NH | 4 | AR | 24 | CA | 51 |
| SC | 10 | AZ | 24 | VA | 54 |
| NV | 13 | WA | 24 | AK | 56 |
| AL | 14 | NC | 36 | DE | 56 |
| CT | 16 | WI | 36 | VT | 56 |
| TN | 16 | OR | 38 | FL | 68 |
| OH | 20 | GA | 39 | IL | 68 |
| UT | 20 | ND | 44 | NY | 71 |
| | | NM | 44 | OK | 72 |
| | | TX | 45 | DC | 96 |

Figure 4: States with initial armed training hours



Initial Training Timing

All states that require armed training demand the applicant to complete this training before performing armed security officer duties. The timing requirement for unarmed security officers, however, varies. Unarmed applicants might have to complete the training (1) prior to applying for licensure/registration; (2) within a specific time frame after starting employment; (3) prior to applications and after starting employment; (4) prior to starting employment; (5) within a specific time frame after registration.

Of the 29 states¹¹ that mandate training for unarmed security officers, 12 states¹² (41%), require applicants for licensure or registration to complete the training prior to submitting an application to the licensing agency. In these states, the completion of training is a prerequisite for licensure/registration.

In addition, three states¹³ make the training timing relevant to the actual employment rather than to licensure/registration and demand completion of training prior to commencing employment as an unarmed security officer. However, six states call for training completion after starting employment as a security officer within a specific period.¹⁴ The fulfillment of training ranges hereby, from 21 days to 6 months. Therefore, 13 states (45%) require at least partially training completion after commencing employment as an unarmed security officer. North Dakota is the only state that requires training for unarmed security officers after the registration and regardless of employment status.¹⁵ Figure 5 shows the distribution of the unarmed training timing.

¹¹ This includes the 28 states with hourly requirements and Texas because despite missing an hourly requirement, the licensing agency organizes and oversees training. Nevada and West Virginia lack such an organized training curriculum and are therefore, excluded from the analysis.

¹² Training required prior to application in: Arkansas, Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont

¹³ Training required prior to commencing employment: Arizona, Montana, and South Carolina

¹⁴ Training required within specific time after commencing employment: Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

¹⁵ Hereby, registration is a requirement for employment. The training requirements of North Dakota are overall exceptional. The requirement outlined here (12 hours of training) is the minimum requirement for the status of an entry-level 'apprentice security officer'. The status of a 'security officer' requires an additional 32 hours of training and a minimum of 3000 hours experience as an apprentice security officer. See: N.D. Admin. Code 93-02-02.1-05

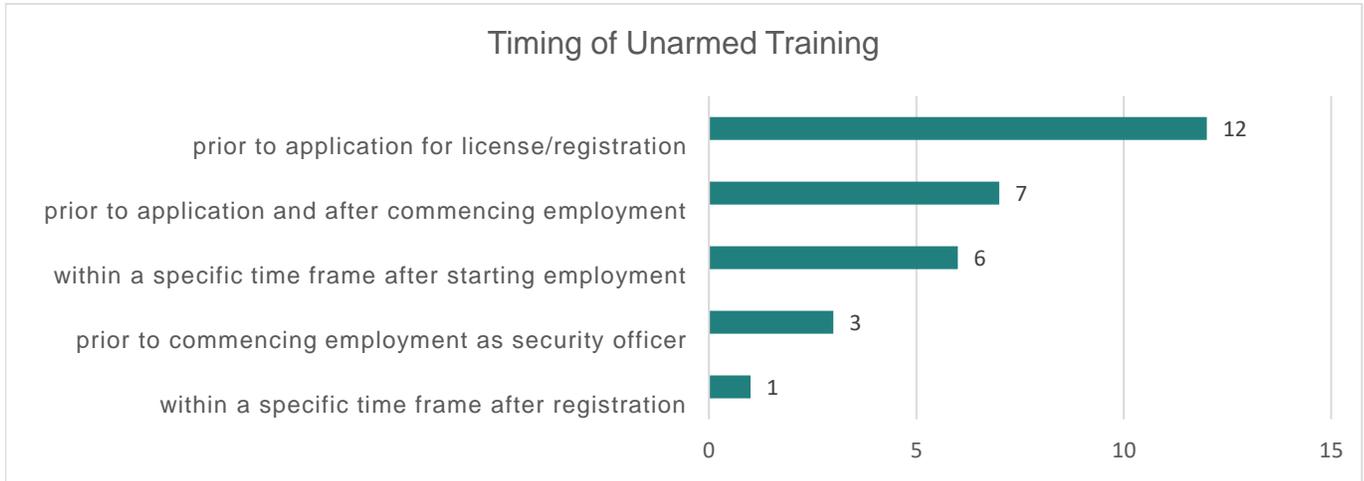


Figure 5: Categorization of timing of unarmed training during the hiring process.

Refresher Training and Timing

States may require security officer to undergo additional continuous education or “refresher training” in addition to the initial training requirements. The refresher training hours and timing vary across states for both unarmed and armed designations.

Unarmed Refresher Training

Refresher training is not required in nine states that require initial unarmed training.¹⁶ A total of 20 states (68%) outline a refresher training with specific hourly requirements for unarmed security officers, while South Carolina requires continuing education only at the discretion of the licensing institution.¹⁷ Table 1 provides an overview of refresher training requirements and timing.

Hawaii has the fewest hours of refresher training, with four hours every three years, while Utah has the most, with 32 hours every two years. The majority of 11 states call for eight hours of refresher training. However, only six states require these eight hours annually, four states require them biennially, and one requires them only triennially. Overall, the refresher training mandates are commonly either in an annual (eight states) or biennial (nine states) cycle.

¹⁶ States that require initial but no refresher training: Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont.

¹⁷ See: https://www.sled.sc.gov/forms/security/Primary_Basic.pdf (Page 4)



| Hours | Timing | | | | Total |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | Annual | Biennial | Triennial | Every five years | |
| 4 Hours | 1 WA | 3 NM, OR, VA | 1 HI | | 5 |
| 6 Hours | 1 MN | 1 AR | | | 2 |
| 8 Hours | 6 AK, CA, DC, IL, MT, NY | 4 AL, AZ, GA, NJ | 1 OK | | 11 |
| 16 Hours | | | | 1 DE | 1 |
| 32 Hours | | 1 UT | | | 1 |
| Total | 8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 20 |

Table 1: Hourly unarmed refresher training requirements according to timing cycle.

Armed Refresher Training

The armed refresher training requirements discussed in this section exclude the previously mentioned unarmed requirements. For this analysis, a range qualification will be considered a type of training. However, this is a qualitative assessment with no specific time requirements. In addition to the 28 states requiring specific initial training hours, three states with no specific initial training hours also require do not require specific refresher training.¹⁸ Table 2 shows the armed refresher training hours according to the timing cycle.

Of the states with specific hours of armed refresher training, California requires the fewest, with two hours every two years. Most refresher training hours are required in four states with eight hours per year, while one state mandates 16 hours every two years. Moreover, 12 states (38%) do not specify an hourly requirement for armed refresher training. In contrast to unarmed refresher training, the annual timing cycle dominates for armed refresher training, as 23 states (72%) require continuing education and/or range qualifications every year.

¹⁸ States with no specific initial training and no specific refresher training: Louisiana, Montana, and Pennsylvania.



| Hours | Timing | | Other | Total |
|---------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| | Annual | Biennial | | |
| 2 Hours | 1 AL | 1 CA | | 2 |
| 4 Hours | 4 FL, NH, NC, VA | 1 TN | | 5 |
| 6 Hours | 2 MN, WI | 2 TX, VT | | 4 |
| 8 Hours | 3 AZ, NJ, NY | | | 3 |
| 12 Hours | 1 AR | | | 1 |
| 16 Hours | | 1 UT | | 1 |
| Not specified | 12 ¹⁹ | | 4 ²⁰ DE, NV, OK, PA | 16 |
| Total | 23 | 5 | 4 | 32 |

Table 2: Hourly armed refresher training requirements according to timing cycle.

¹⁹ States where annual training hours are not specified: Alaska, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Washington.

²⁰ Delaware armed security officers “must shoot a minimum of three qualifying shoots per calendar year, scheduled on at least two separate days, with a minimum go days between scheduled day shoots.” See: Delaware Code Title 24, Chapter 13, 1.0 Firearm’s Policy.

Nevada requires firearms requalification every six months. See: NAC 648.350.

Oklahoma does not specify the timing for firearms requalification.

Pennsylvania requires refresher training upon licensure renewal, which is every five years.



Findings

The main findings of this analysis are listed below.

- Unarmed training requirements with specific hours are mandated in 28 states (54%).
- Armed training requirements with specific hours are mandated in 28 states (54%), but only 23 of these states have unarmed training requirements with specific hours.
- On average, armed security officers receive twice as many hours of training as unarmed security officers.
- Completion of all training is required for licensure/registration in 12 states (41%) of states that mandate unarmed training
- Completing unarmed training after starting employment as an unarmed security officer is at least partially permitted in 13 states (45%).
- In all states that require armed training, security officers must complete such training before performing armed security officer duties.
- Approximately two thirds of states that require initial unarmed training also require refresher training.
- For unarmed security officers, an annual (40%) or biennial (45%) refresher training cycle for is most common.
- Approximately 72% of states with armed refresher requirements require them annually.

Conclusion

The training requirements for armed and unarmed entry-level security firm employees differ significantly across states, to the point where no two states are alike. A comparison of requirements is not trivial and the analysis presented here is limited by quantifying these qualitative differences of legal language. However, the most significant pattern is the approximate double training time required of armed compared to unarmed security officers.



Appendix - Table A: Overview of state training requirements

| State | Unarmed initial training hours | Unarmed initial training timing | Unarmed refresher training | Unarmed refresher timing | Armed initial training hours | Armed refresher training | Armed refresher training timing |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Alabama | 8 | prior to application for license/ registration | 8 | biennial | 14 | 2 | annual |
| Alaska | 48 | prior to application for license/ registration | 8 | annual | 56 | not specified | annual |
| Arizona | 8 | prior to commencing employment | 8 | biennial | 24 | 8 | annual |
| Arkansas | 8 | prior to application for license/ registration | 6 | biennial | 24 | 12 | annual |
| California | 40 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 8 | annual | 51 | 2 | biennial |
| Colorado | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Connecticut | 8 | prior to application for license/ registration | 0 | none | 15 | not specified | annual |
| Delaware | 16 | prior to application for license/ registration | 16 | every 5 years | 56 | not specified | 3x per year |
| District of Columbia | 40 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 8 | annual | 96 | not specified | annual |
| Florida | 40 | prior to application for license/ registration | 0 | none | 68 | 4 | annul |
| Georgia | 24 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 8 | biennial | 39 | not specified | annual |
| Hawaii | 12 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 4 | triennial | state permit required | -- | -- |
| Idaho | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Illinois | 28 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 8 | annual | 68 | not specified | annual |
| Indiana | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Iowa | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | state permit required | -- | -- |
| Kansas | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |



| State | Unarmed initial training hours | Unarmed initial training timing | Unarmed refresher training | Unarmed refresher timing | Armed initial training hours | Armed refresher training | Armed refresher training timing |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Kentucky | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Louisiana | 16 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 0 | none | not specified | not specified | annual |
| Maine | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | no training requirements | -- | -- |
| Maryland | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | state permit required | -- | -- |
| Massachusetts | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Michigan | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | no training requirements | -- | -- |
| Minnesota | 12 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 6 | annual | not specified | 6 | annual |
| Mississippi | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | not specified | -- | -- |
| Missouri | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Montana | 16 | prior to commencing employment | 8 | annual | not specified | not specified | annual |
| Nebraska | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Nevada | not specified | -- | -- | -- | 13 | not specified | every 6 months |
| New Hampshire | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | 4 | 4 | annual |
| New Jersey | 24 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 8 | biennial | state permit required | 8 | annual |
| New Mexico | 8 | prior to application for license/ registration | 4 | biennial | 44 | not specified | annual |
| New York | 24 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 8 | annual | 71 | 8 | annual |
| North Carolina | 16 | within a specific time frame after starting employment | 0 | none | 36 | 4 | annual |



| State | Unarmed initial training hours | Unarmed initial training timing | Unarmed refresher training | Unarmed refresher timing | Armed initial training hours | Armed refresher training | Armed refresher training timing |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| North Dakota | 12 | within a specific time frame after registration | 0 | none | 44 | -- | -- |
| Ohio | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | 20 | not specified | annual |
| Oklahoma | 40 | prior to application for license/ registration | 8 | triennial | 72 | not specified | annual |
| Oregon | 14 | prior to application for license/ registration | 4 | biennial | 38 | not specified | annual |
| Pennsylvania | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | not specified | not specified | every 5 years |
| Rhode Island | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | state permit required | -- | -- |
| South Carolina | 6 | prior to commencing employment | not specified | annual | 10 | not specified | annual |
| South Dakota | no state requirements | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |
| Tennessee | 4 | prior to application for license/ registration | 0 | none | 16 | 4 | biennial |
| Texas | not specified | prior to application for license/ registration | 0 | none | 45 | 6 | biennial |
| Utah | 8 | prior to application for license/ registration | 32 | biennial | 20 | 16 | biennial |
| Vermont | 40 | prior to application for license/ registration | 0 | none | 56 | 6 | biennial |
| Virginia | 22 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 4 | biennial | 54 | 4 | annual |
| Washington | 16 | prior to application and after commencing employment | 4 | annual | 24 | 4 | annual |
| West Virginia | not specified | -- | -- | -- | state permit required | -- | -- |
| Wisconsin | no training requirements | -- | -- | -- | 36 | 6 | annual |
| Wyoming | no state requirement | -- | -- | -- | no state requirements | -- | -- |