

City of Virginia Beach Police Department

Virginia Beach Police Department Hiring Practices and Guidelines



A Guide for Department Personnel

- Guidelines for the selection and hiring of sworn personnel

*This Field Guide is Prepared and Updated by the Virginia Beach
Police Department PD & T and Human Resources*

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Background (CALEA 31.4.2, 31.4.3)

In response to declining numbers of qualified applicants for police officer, the Virginia Beach Police Department initiated a year-round recruiting/hiring program in February 2000. Since that time, applications have been solicited and accepted continuously. Testing is offered several times a year on weekdays and weekends to accommodate applicant work schedules and travel arrangements. The selection process is composed of several steps in a multi-tiered approach; applicants must successfully complete one step before proceeding to the next step. When the applicant has successfully completed each step in the selection process, he/she has met the minimum qualifications for employment and will be extended a conditional offer of employment, contingent upon successful completion of firearms and fingerprint checks, as well as the medical and psychological examinations provided at City expense. In partnership with the Police Professional Development and Training (PD&T) staff, Human Resources continuously evaluate the job-related criteria of the selection process in accordance with the EEOC's Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection Procedures. Applicable validation studies are stored in the Human Resources Department.

Sworn Selection Process (CALEA 31.4.1)

The following is a brief description of the selection steps in the process, in the order that the applicant experiences them, with the exception of off-site testing. All elements of the selection process for sworn personnel shall be administered, scored, evaluated and interpreted uniformly.

Online Application Process

The selection process begins when the applicant completes the online application form available through the City website, known as the Web Application for Virginia Beach Employment (WAVE). Applicants making minor omissions on the application form that can be corrected or clarified during the selection process shall not be eliminated from consideration for employment.

In submitting the online application, the applicant must agree to statements relating to conditions of work, such as shift work and the departmental policy prohibiting the use of tobacco products on/off duty. The applicant must indicate acceptance of the Statement of Certification, which describes the requirement for all City employees to authorize criminal background checks and acknowledges the practice of awarding compensatory time in lieu of overtime pay. Applicants are required to establish user accounts so that applicant status information may be obtained via the online system.

Upon submitting the online application, the applicant shall complete the Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ) and its supplemental documents (Authorization for Release of Information, Authorization for the Procurement of a Consumer (Credit) Report and Medical Waiver for Testing) which are posted on the City website. The applicant shall then mail to (or drop off at) Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA) the following documents at least 30 days prior to their desired test date:

- a) Completed PHQ *does not need to be notarized*
- b) Authorization for Release of Information (notarized)
- c) Authorization for the Procurement of a Consumer (Credit) Report
- d) Copy of driver's license
- e) Copy of social security card
- f) Copy of high school diploma or GED, or transcripts
- g) Copy of DD-214 (preferably long form) if discharged from uniformed services and/or copy of

- Military ID if Active Duty or Reserve
- h) Copy of birth certificate
- i) Prior to hire, Official college transcripts in sealed envelope (if applicant has attended more than one institution, transfer credits from previous school(s) must be itemized on the final school's transcript; if not, transcripts from each institution must be provided)

The Medical Waiver is to be signed by a doctor within 60 days of testing and submitted the day of the Physical Ability Test. It shall not be submitted with the PHQ packet.

Once the above documents have been received at LETA, the packet shall be reviewed for completeness and automatic disqualifiers. If the packet is approved, the applicant shall be contacted to schedule an appointment for the Next Generation Law Enforcement Written Examination and the Physical Ability Test. If the packet is incomplete, the applicant shall be notified and shall have 1 year from application date to follow-up. After 1 year the applicant will not be considered for testing without resubmitting the entire application.

The online application (WAVE) shall be printed by an Academy Representative and provided to the background investigator so that it may be reviewed and signed by the applicant.

Criminal History Review (CALEA 31.5.1 B)

After review of the applicant's PHQ packet, an initial check of the applicant's criminal history (if any) is performed. Currently, the Virginia Beach Police Department checks CCH/NCIC/VCIN, and LinX databases for criminal history information. Any findings are placed in the applicant's file. If the applicant has been convicted of an offense falling within the parameters of the "automatic disqualifiers" (Attachment 1: Automatic Disqualifiers), then the applicant is provided written notification that he/she is not eligible for the position. If the information pertaining to the criminal conviction is incomplete or unclear, the applicant shall be permitted to test, but the information and/or conviction shall be further evaluated during the background investigation phase of the hiring process.

Credit History Review

The Police Department generates a credit report using Equifax for each applicant prior to initial testing. Applicants with records of unpaid collections, judgments, or liens are notified in writing of our concerns, provided a copy of their credit report, and asked to correct any discrepancy(s) prior to testing. In some cases, applicants may be required to show proof of a formal payment plan to clear accounts or to provide documentation of an appeal to the Credit Bureau to correct errors. Credit reports are reviewed by the PD&T staff.

Driving History Review

The Police Department runs a DMV Record Check through VCIN/NLETS on each applicant. Applicants with -3 or more moving violation points are disqualified from testing until the points have been reduced. Applicants are notified in writing that they can attend a Defensive Driving Course offered by the Division of Motor Vehicles for a reduction of 5 points. Applicants will be approved to test upon receipt of the Course Completion Certificate if point total is less than -3.

Written and Physical Ability Test Administration

On the scheduled testing date, applicants check in with staff members of PD&T by showing official photo identification and the signed Medical Waiver Form. After check-in, it is at the discretion of PD&T supervisors to determine whether the written or physical tests will be completed first. However,

applicants will typically complete the written test first and shall then be placed into small groups that rotate through the physical ability test. Any applicant who leaves the facility without permission prior to completing all required steps shall be disqualified from the hiring process.

If unable to attend the scheduled testing date, the applicant shall call a Virginia Beach Academy Representative to reschedule or to withdraw from the hiring process. If the applicant does not attend the testing date and fails to provide an explanation for his/her absence, the applicant must wait six months to reapply. Also, if the applicant fails to bring the required documentation to the testing date, he/she must reschedule.

Written Test

The written examination is the Next Generation Entry-level Law Enforcement Written Examination developed by CWH and assesses the basic skills of reading and writing, judgment/reasoning and a variety of other abilities and aptitudes related to interpersonal style and personal motivation. The test includes 136 questions in multiple-choice format. Applicants are provided three hours and fifteen minutes to complete the test. A study guide developed by CWH is available online at the Virginia Beach Police Department website. Tests are sent to CWH for scoring. Upon receiving the results from CWH, PD&T staff shall notify applicants of their results (pass/fail). Applicants who are unsuccessful on the written test are notified in writing and must wait a period of 12 months to reapply. No applicant shall take the written exam more than once within a 12 month period.

Physical Ability Test

The physical ability test consists of composite scoring of a battery of four (4) tests which assess the applicant's ability to perform the physical demands associated with the essential functions required of a police officer. The test was developed by Human Performance Systems through content and criterion validation and consists of (1) Push-Ups, (2) Sit & Reach, (3) Trunk Pull and (4) 300 Meter Run.

This is a two-tiered test. The applicant must achieve an overall score of -284 or greater while also achieving the minimum thresholds for each portion of the test. The minimum thresholds are as follows: Push-Ups (11 or greater), Sit & Reach (5.33 cm or greater), Trunk Pull (72.27 cm or greater), 300 Meter Run (112.09 seconds or less). At the conclusion of the physical ability test, applicants shall be provided their results (pass/fail). Unsuccessful applicants shall also be notified in writing and shall be allowed to return to the next scheduled testing date. If more than nine months have elapsed from the date of the applicant's successful physical ability test and the applicant has not been conditionally hired as a police recruit, the applicant may be required to repeat the physical ability test. This requirement is designed to ensure that the applicant is continuing to participate in a physical fitness regimen in preparation for the academy training.

Polygraph Examination (CALEA 31.5.3, 31.5.4)

Every applicant who successfully completes the written and physical testing is notified in writing to schedule a polygraph examination. Appointments are typically made through telephone contact and confirmed via email. At the polygraph appointment, applicants complete a detailed questionnaire before beginning the exam. Prior to testing, the examiner reviews each question to be asked during the examination with the applicant. During testing, the examiner asks each applicant questions from a template that are based on the information provided in the applicant's questionnaire. The examiner then reviews the information created by the applicant's psycho-physiological data recorded at the moment the applicant answers each question. If deception is indicated, a follow-up interview and/or additional testing are conducted. All polygraph exams are reviewed by another examiner to ensure quality control and agreement on the findings. A written report from the polygraph examiner detailing the applicant's

admissions is sent to the background investigator, included in the applicant's file and submitted for review by the pre-screening review committee. The applicant's admissions are evaluated to determine employment suitability. See General Order 8.07, Polygraph Unit, for additional information regarding the administration of polygraph exams. The polygraph report is considered valid for a period of nine months.

Background Investigation (CALEA 31.5.1 C)

Upon successful completion of the written and physical ability applicant testing, each applicant is assigned to a background investigator. The investigator begins his/her review by interviewing the applicant in his/her home for local applicants, or at the site of the polygraph examination for non-local applicants. At this initial appointment, the applicant is asked to review the printed version of the online application and to provide a signature indicating accuracy and completeness. In addition, the background investigator shall notify the applicant of any concerns regarding missing documents or incomplete information to provide the applicant with an opportunity to correct any discrepancies and to ensure that the background investigation can be completed in a timely manner. The applicant shall be required to show the background investigator his original driver's license, birth certificate, social security card, high school diploma or GED, and DD-214/Military ID. The applicant's background investigator shall then certify the previously submitted copies as "true copies". Subsequently, the background investigator interviews employment references (including at least one supervisor), at least two additional personal references, and shall develop and interview one reference not listed by the applicant. If significant issues of concern are identified in the polygraph examination or through other reference information, the background investigator shall contact a supervisor at PD&T to discuss the areas of concern. The supervisor shall determine if the background investigation is to be terminated. If terminated, the file is then presented to the pre-screening review committee.

The background investigators confirm that the applicant meets all minimum requirements, including but not limited to U.S. citizenship (or application for citizenship), age twenty-one by the date of academy graduation, valid Virginia or North Carolina driver's license (or eligibility to obtain) and verification of education. A written report is compiled detailing all the findings of the investigation, submitted with the applicant file and sent electronically to the police selection officer and the Recruiting and Selection Sergeant. This information is reviewed by the pre-screening review committee.

Pre-Screening Review (CALEA 31.5.1 A, B, 31.5.5)

A review of the results from the polygraph examination and the findings of the background investigation is conducted and discussed by a committee which is representative of the department. Members include representatives at the sergeant rank or above from the Operations Division and PD&T. Additional committee members include a certified polygraph examiner and a representative from the Department of Human Resources. The purpose of this committee review is to ensure that decisions to disqualify applicants based on background factors are made appropriately and consistently, and are based on relevant job-related factors. A failed or deceptive polygraph examination shall never be the sole determinant of any applicant's status. A summary of the discussion points for each candidate is prepared by the Recruiting and Selection Sergeant to provide a written record of the basis for decision-making.

Applicants who are disqualified by the pre-screening review committee are provided written notification and are invited to solicit feedback from the Commanding Officer of PD&T or his/her designee. In some cases, applicants may present additional information resulting in a subsequent review and discussion by the pre-screening review committee. Candidates disqualified by the pre-screening review committee must wait six months to reapply.

All files recommended by the pre-screening review committee are reviewed by the Commanding Officer of

PD&T. Questionable files are discussed with the Chief of Police, or his/her designee. In these cases, approval shall be obtained from the Chief of Police or his designee before continuing to consider the applicant for employment.

Driving Record

Once approved by the pre-screening review committee, an applicant must provide the police selection officer with an official driving abstract from the state in which he/she is currently licensed to drive. The driving abstract must be brought to his/her oral board interview.

Oral Interview

Once approved by the pre-screening review committee, arrangements are made to interview the applicant before a panel. Panel composition includes representatives from Operations Division, PD&T and Human Resources and shall comply with the provisions set forth in General Order 2.04 (Selection Process). The purpose of the interview is to further evaluate the applicant's qualifications based upon the knowledge, skills and abilities outlined in the job description, to provide the applicant an opportunity to meet representatives of the department and to ask questions, to ensure the applicant understands the requirements of the academy and to ensure that the applicant possesses the level of self-motivation required to be successful in both the academy setting and as a patrol officer.

Interviews are conducted using a structured format. Panel members are expected to follow the script of questions, unless: an applicant's remarks require clarification; rephrasing is necessary because the applicant has misunderstood the question; or a follow-up question is requested by the pre-screening review committee. Questions designed to solicit information from the applicant regarding past behavior are purposefully included in the interview. Panel members individually rate the applicants and then participate in group discussion to reach consensus regarding whether the applicant is recommended for employment.

Applicants who are not recommended for employment are notified verbally and in writing, and may reapply after six months. The panel members develop feedback comments for the police selection officer to share with applicants that are not recommended for employment.

Successful candidates are provided a conditional job offer letter and are scheduled to complete their psychological testing, medical screening, and other requirements for employment.

Psychological Examination (CALEA 31.5.7)

The psychological examination includes both written testing (MMPI-2, NEO PI-R and 16PF) and a personal interview with the psychologist to determine suitability for employment. The psychological evaluation is considered valid for a period of six months. If an applicant is not recommended for hire by the psychologist, the applicant shall be notified in writing by the Commanding Officer of PD&T and must wait six months to reapply. The police selection officer is merely notified of whether the psychologist recommends the candidate for employment. A detailed report is sent directly to Occupational Health Services (OHS).

Medical Examination (CALEA 31.5.6)

A full pre-employment medical examination, including drug screening, is performed by OHS to determine suitability for employment based upon medical standards validated through the Human Performance Systems physical abilities job analysis study. This assessment is based on the applicant's ability to

physically perform the essential functions of the position. OHS staff addresses any concerns arising from the medical examination directly with the applicant, often requesting information from the applicant's primary care physician. OHS staff provides a form letter to the Police Department recommending, deferring or not recommending the applicant for employment. Applicants who are not recommended receive written notification of their disqualification from PD&T, however they are encouraged to contact OHS directly for feedback. Unsuccessful candidates must wait six months to reapply.

Criminal Background Check (FBI)

During this final stage of consideration, the applicant's fingerprints are submitted to the FBI to check for criminal convictions that may be disqualifiers for the position. A firearms check is also conducted through the State Police to ensure the applicant can legally possess a firearm.

Final Offer of Employment

The Commanding Officer of PD&T may extend an employment offer letter after reviewing results from testing, medical screening, and all other related checks required of this process.

Resignation of Recruits and Subsequent Re-testing

Any recruit who resigns due to a performance issue (for example, failure to maintain the academic standard or failure to pass firearms) and not a conduct issue may immediately apply for admission to the next academy with the approval of the Chief of Police or his designee. Individuals approved for this option may be "fast-tracked" through the pre-employment phases by submitting a written request to the Commanding Officer of PD & T. If accepted, these individuals will be required to complete a physical agility test, an updated PHQ, an abbreviated background check, and a new medical exam.

Probationary Period (CALEA 31.5.8)

Individuals hired at the level of police officer recruit serve a 15-month probationary period while those hired as certified police officers serve a 12-month probationary period. If applicable, time employed prior to the academy start date does not count toward the probationary period. In cases where training is extended in the Academy or post-Academy training phase, the Commanding Officer of PD&T may request an extension of the probationary period, contingent on the approval of the Director of Human Resources.

Benefits which hinge on completion of the probationary period include full grievance rights and participation in the tuition reimbursement program. Current full-time employees transferring from other City positions to become police officers do not serve a second probationary period.

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and Other Certified Applicants

Applicants who are already working as police officers for other jurisdictions both within and outside the state of Virginia are invited to apply for the position of police officer. In some cases, deputy sheriffs employed in rural areas and assigned patrol functions may meet DCJS certification requirements. All steps in the selection process are the same (as described herein.) The training and work experiences of certified applicants will be verified and evaluated during the background investigation and oral interview phases. Applicants who meet the requirements for certified employment will complete an orientation program in lieu of the full recruit academy. Certified officers may be required to attend a modified certified academy followed by a modified Police Training Officer (PTO) program. These training programs will emphasize the Virginia Beach Police Department operational and administrative procedures as well as City/State Codes. If no modified certified academy is available, qualified applicants may attend the recruit academy.

Former Virginia Beach Police Officers Seeking Reinstatement/Reemployment

Former Virginia Beach Police Officers seeking reinstatement/reemployment shall submit a written request to the Police Chief or his/her designee. The Police Chief shall discuss the request and the personnel records of the former employee with the Deputy Police Chiefs, Commanding Officer of Professional Development and Training and the Human Resources Coordinator. If satisfactory, the former officer will be invited to complete the selection process as described below.

Former officers whose DCJS certification has not expired may participate in an abbreviated selection process as described below:

Former officers requesting reinstatement 30 days or less from the date of separation will be required to complete a written request for reinstatement to the Chief of Police.

Former officers requesting reinstatement 31 days to 180 days from the date of separation will be required to complete a written request for reinstatement to the Chief of Police, PHQ, polygraph examination, background investigation, pre-screening review and a medical examination.

Former officers seeking reinstatement 181 days to 365 days from the date of separation will be required to complete a written request for reinstatement to the Chief of Police, online application, PHQ, DMV abstract, physical ability test, polygraph examination, background investigation, pre-screening review, psychological exam, and a medical examination.

Former officers seeking reemployment one year or more from the date of separation will be required to complete a written request for reinstatement to the Chief of Police, online application, PHQ, DMV abstract, physical ability test, polygraph examination, background investigation, pre-screening review, psychological exam, and a medical examination.

If the former employee is not eligible for certification as a police officer within three months of reemployment, the former employee will be required to complete all steps in the selection process as a new applicant.

Clarification of Terms

The terms “reinstatement” and “reemployment” are defined by City Code and City policy. (Reference City Code Sections 2-105 and 2-106.)

- Reinstatement: To qualify as a reinstated employee, the return to City employment must occur within twelve months of separation. Reinstated employees enjoy some continuance of longevity-based benefits, such as service credit for determining leave accrual rates, restoration of sick leave balances, eligibility for participation in promotional processes, etc.
- Reemployment: Reemployment occurs after an absence of more than twelve months. Former employees who are reemployed shall revert to the status of a new employee and shall be required to serve an employment probationary period with minimum leave accrual rates. The only benefit retained based upon reemployment would be service credit for retirement purposes if the employee has not withdrawn the funds from the Virginia Retirement System upon separation of employment in accordance with state law.

Records Retention/Security (CALEA 31.4.6)

The Virginia Beach Police Department shall follow the State Library of Virginia's records retention and disposition schedule as well as comply with privacy regulations included in the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, to the extent applicable. Any documents created from the NCIC/VCIN systems shall comply with the provisions set forth by the Virginia State Police and the Code of Virginia. Personnel files, selection records, testing information and other related information generated during the selection process are covered by the General Schedule No. 3 published by the State Library of Virginia.

AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFIERS FOR POLICE OFFICER

Criminal History

Conviction of any felony.

Conviction of any Class 1 or Class 2 misdemeanor, excluding traffic violations which are discussed separately, or the Virginia State Law equivalent within the last 5 years.¹

Any conviction of domestic violence, including simple assault against a domestic partner, spouse, child or parent.

Adult commission of undetected crimes of a serious or repetitive nature.

Traffic Violations

Three or more negative points on a Virginia Operator's License or the equivalent for out of state licenses. Points may be negated by attending defensive driving school offered by the Division of Motor Vehicles prior to initial testing.

Any conviction of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, refusal to take blood or breath test, eluding police, racing, or leaving the scene of an accident within the last 5 years.

Drugs²

Sale or distribution of illegal drugs.

Unlawful use/possession of any illegal drug, including but not limited to heroin, cocaine, hallucinogens, methamphetamine, etc. or any derivative thereof (except marijuana) within the last ten year (10) years.

Illegal use/possession of anabolic steroids within the last 3 years.

Illegal use/possession of marijuana or a derivative thereof within the previous twelve months.

Credit

Demonstrated history of financial irresponsibility. (Examples of areas of concern include unpaid collections or unsatisfactory judgments where no payment plan has been established. Please call the academy staff to discuss your specific credit issues and concerns.)

Others

Dishonorable discharge from any military service.

Untruthfulness and/or the intentional withholding of information on any application, interview, or paperwork associated with the position. Examples of intentional withholding of information would include deliberate inaccuracies or incomplete statements.

Intentional failure to follow the directions outlined in the testing process or relying on others to complete any portion of the testing process.

¹**Note: Some minor offenses are classified as Class 1 misdemeanors (e.g. littering), but would not result in automatic disqualification. Convictions of this nature would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in the context of the full investigation/review. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Professional Development and Training staff to discuss any specific concerns regarding your eligibility for employment as a police officer.**

²**Illegal drug is defined as set forth in the Federal Controlled Substance Act, 21 U.S.C. §800 et al. and by the Code of Virginia.**

NOTE:

This is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of background disqualifiers. Applicants who are successful in the initial testing will undergo a thorough background investigation, including polygraph examination. Areas of concern will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis within the context of the full investigation/review. Examples of areas of concern may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reduction of charges as a result of a plea agreement or other form of sentencing disposition prior to a conviction in any of the aforementioned criminal and driving history categories.
- Crimes committed as a juvenile, including undetected crime.
- Patterns of reckless and/or irresponsible driving.
- Multiple convictions of driving under the influence.
- Illegal drug use/possession that does not fall within the parameters defined above.
- Less than honorable military discharge, erratic work record, or unfavorable employment references.
- Pending litigation or prosecution for criminal offenses must be resolved prior to consideration for employment.