

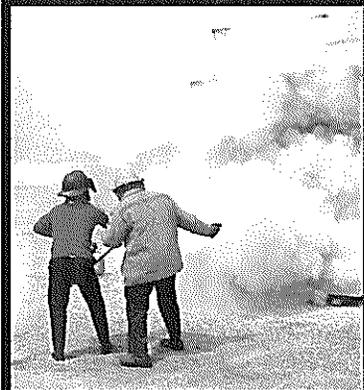
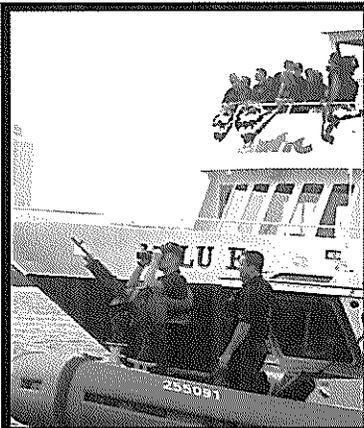
## Questions & Answers (Q&A)

**Q: Are there any other advantages or disadvantages to receiving unclassified terrorism-related information?**

**A:** An additional advantage of receiving unclassified terrorism-related information is that there may be fewer restrictions on your ability to further disseminate it within your jurisdiction. Classified information may only be disseminated to other cleared persons, who also have a need-to-know.

**Q: If I choose not to apply for a security clearance will I still be informed about homeland security issues important to my jurisdiction?**

**A:** Absolutely. If the USCG receives information relevant to terrorism which may impact your jurisdiction, you will be informed via available mechanisms which are approved for the transmission of unclassified information. Most maritime security related information can be provided in an unclassified form.

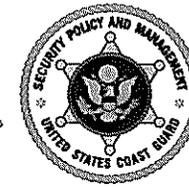


*For further information on this process contact your local COTP.*

# Coast Guard Sponsored State, Local, and Industry Security Clearance Program

## Step by Step Guide

1. Determine Need-to-Know
2. Contact COTP to obtain "sponsorship" and required paperwork.
3. Complete required paperwork and submit to COTP
4. USCG Security Center reviews paperwork, and determines eligibility for investigation
5. USCG forwards paperwork to the Office of Personnel Management, who conducts investigation
6. If clearance is approved, Security Center notifies COTP
7. COTP provides access briefing and administers non-disclosure agreement



*Getting Your  
Security Clearance,  
Questions & Answers*

# State, Local, and Industry Security Program

## **T**HE HOMELAND SECURITY ACT

states that, "providing specific warning information to State and local government personnel, agencies, and authorities, the private sector, other entities, and the public" is a primary responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in coordination with other executive agencies. The majority of information DHS shares with the state and local government officials can and will be communicated at the unclassified level. However there are some instances that may require these officials to access classified information. Most of this information will be shared at the Secret level, but access to any classified information requires a federally sponsored security clearance. This brochure describes the role and importance of security clearances.

A **SECRET SECURITY CLEARANCE** may be granted to those persons that have a "need-to-know" national security information, classified at the Confidential or Secret level. It is generally the most appropriate security clearance for state and local officials. The procedure is as follows: A candidate who possesses the "need-to-know" may be nominated, or may request a clearance from the Captain of the Port (COTP). The COTP sponsors that individual by assisting in the completion of the SF-86, credit release, and fingerprint forms. Upon receiving the forms through the Captain of The Port, the USCG Security Center then performs record checks with various Federal agencies and local law enforcement, as well as a review of the applicant's credit history. Once favorably adjudicated for a Secret security clearance, the candidate will be requested to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

## Getting Your Clearance – Questions & Answers (Q&A)

**Q: Who should apply for a security clearance?**

A: State, local and industry officials whose duties involving an Area Maritime Security Committee or Coast Guard Operations Center require that they have access to classified information, and who are willing to undergo a mandatory background investigation. Clearances are only for those officials with a "need-to-know," not a "want-to-know" or "nice-to-know."

**Q: How long does it normally take to obtain a clearance?**

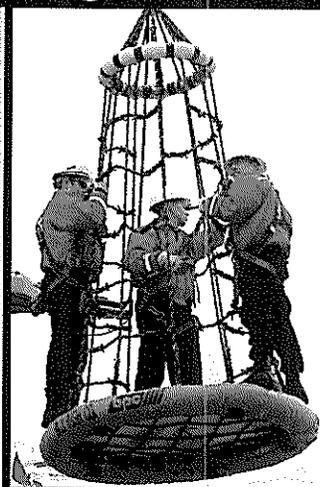
A: The processing time for each individual case will vary depending upon its complexity. It is the goal of the USCG to complete the processing required for Secret security clearances within approximately 60 days.

**Q: What is the difference between an interim and a full security clearance?**

A: Interim clearances are granted in exceptional circumstances where official functions must be performed before completion of the investigative and adjudicative processes associated with the security clearance procedure.

**Q: What is the purpose of a background investigation?**

A: It is designed to allow the government to assess whether a candidate is sufficiently trustworthy to be granted access to classified information. Applicants must meet certain criteria, relating to their honesty, character, reliability, judgment, mental health, and association with undesirable persons or foreign nationals.



**Q: What can I do to keep the time it takes to perform the background investigation as short as possible?**

A: You can help the USCG complete the processing of your packet as quickly as possible by providing accurate information, and being as specific as possible on all entries, including your employer(s), location(s), dates assigned to each location, including any/all gaps in employment.

**Q: What kind of inquiries will the USCG make into my background?**

A: For a Secret security clearance, credit and criminal history checks will be conducted.

**Q: If an individual occupies an executive position with a law enforcement agency, must he or she still undergo a background investigation in order to access classified information?**

A: An Executive Order (EO), issued by the President, requires background investigations for all persons entrusted with access to classified information. The provisions of the EO are mandatory, cannot be waived, and apply equally to all federal, state, and local and private sector candidates.

**Q: If I have a poor credit history, or other issues in my background, will this prevent me from getting a security clearance?**

A: A poor credit history, or other issues, will not necessarily disqualify a candidate from receiving a clearance, but resolution of the issues will likely take additional time. If the issues are significant, they may prevent a clearance from being approved.