



A Consumer's Guide to the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services



Many consumers concerned about safety turn to private security professionals to protect their homes and businesses. If you are considering hiring a private security professional, there are a few things to keep in mind.

For your protection

All private security-related individuals and businesses, including security guards, alarm companies, locksmiths, and private investigators, must be licensed by the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS).

Everyone in a job under BSIS' jurisdiction must carry the appropriate license while at work. A valid license means the person passed a criminal background check and met other legal requirements. BSIS monitors unlicensed activity and may initiate administrative, civil, or criminal enforcement action for violations.

BSIS licenses and regulates the following:

Locksmith companies and their locksmiths, who install, repair or open locks, and modify or make keys. Someone who makes a duplicate key from blank stock does not need a BSIS license.

Private investigators conduct criminal or civil investigations for individuals, businesses, and public agencies.

Proprietary security officers are hired by a business or individual to provide security only for that business or individual. They are unarmed.

Training facilities offer courses in firearms and baton handling, and the instructors who teach firearms and baton use.

Alarm companies sell, install, service, maintain, and monitor alarm systems. Some alarm company employees also need a license, but retail outlets that only sell alarm systems do not.

Private patrol operators employ security guards to provide security services under a contract. The security guards who work for the operator also need a registration and must carry it on the job. Security personnel who carry a baton, firearm, or tear gas must complete additional training and carry other permits.

BSIS' other role

BSIS also oversees repossession agencies. Repossessors recover personal property for a creditor when a consumer defaults on certain loans for a vehicle, boat, or motorcycle. See the BSIS publication "Consumer Guide to Repossession Practices." Go online to www.bsis.ca.gov or call (800) 952-5210 for a copy.

How to be an informed consumer

Here are some steps you should take before you sign a contract for private security services.

Verify the BSIS license. Call DCA's Consumer Information Center (CIC) at (800) 952-5210, or go online to www.bsis.ca.gov to check licensing.

Other steps

Compare prices. Get three or more estimates for similar services. Ask for referrals and check them.

Contact the DCA Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210 to ask about any BSIS-related complaints against the company or individual.

Contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to check the background on a company. Local BBB offices are in your phone directory or online at www.bbb.org.

Make sure all contract terms and conditions are in writing. Read the contract and be sure you understand it. An alarm company's written contract must include the company's license number, the approximate dates work will begin and end, a description of the alarm system to be installed, as well as any monitoring, repair, or other services to be provided after installation. Be sure to ask about any monthly fees.

If you want to cancel your contract

If you change your mind about a private patrol, private investigator, or alarm company service after you have signed a contract in your home, you have three days to cancel the contract. Remember, the three-day cancellation applies **only** to a contract signed in your home, not at a business.

Deliver your cancellation paperwork in person within three days or send it by certified mail, with a return receipt requested.

If you have a problem

Call DCA's Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210 for help or to report a problem. Assistance is available in English, Spanish, and 144 other languages.

Complaint Resolution may work

DCA's Complaint Resolution Program helps parties resolve disputes. Call the CIC for details on resolution or go to www.dca.ca.gov/complainthelp.

DCA Consumer Information Center

(800) 952-5210; TDD (916) 928-1227

Bureau of Security and Investigative Services

2420 Del Paso Road, Suite 270
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(916) 322-4000

www.bsis.ca.gov



A GUIDE TO THE
Bureau of Security and Investigative Services



A Security Professional's Guide to the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services



Crime prevention is a major concern in today's society. As a result, many consumers are turning to the private security industry to help protect their neighborhoods and businesses.

The Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS) licenses and regulates the individuals and companies that provide private security services in the State. These include private patrol operators, security guards, private investigators, alarm companies and their employees, locksmiths and their employees, and repossession agencies and their employees. Firearms and baton training facilities, and their instructors, also fall under BSIS's jurisdiction.

BSIS licensing and certification ensures these business operators and specific employees have passed a criminal background check and have met other requirements mandated by law. BSIS monitors unlicensed activity and may initiate administrative, civil or criminal enforcement action for violations.

BSIS regulates the following individuals and businesses:

Individuals

Locksmith employees install, repair, or open locks and modify or make keys. A person who makes duplicate keys from blank stock does not need a locksmith license.

Proprietary Private Security Officers are unarmed, wear a distinctive uniform, and interact with the public. These officers can be hired by an individual business to provide security services; however, their services cannot be contracted out to another business or individual.

Training Instructors (firearms and baton) are employed by training facilities to teach firearms and baton use.

Qualified Managers are the responsible managers for private patrol operators, private investigators, alarm companies and repossession agencies.

A qualified manager must successfully complete a written examination given by BSIS, pass a criminal background check, and provide proof of qualifying experience in the security industry. A qualified manager is the person responsible for the day-to-day operation of the business and is the first point of contact for consumers who have questions about services.

Security guards work for private patrol operators or private businesses. All armed security guards must have a valid security guard registration and a firearms permit.

A guard who carries a concealed weapon must have a concealed weapons permit from a local law enforcement agency, in addition to the BSIS firearms permit.

Security guards cannot work independently—a private patrol operator must employ them. A security guard employed by a private patrol operator must pass a BSIS-approved Powers to Arrest exam given by his or her employer or a BSIS-approved training facility, pass a criminal background check, and meet other training requirements.

Security guards must carry valid "guard cards" on the job. If a security guard carries a firearm, baton, or tear gas, additional training is required, and the security guard must carry valid permits. All security guards must carry a pocket license at all times.

Businesses

Private investigators conduct criminal and civil investigations for individuals, businesses, attorneys, insurance companies, and public agencies.

Locksmith companies contract to provide locksmith services.

Training facilities offer courses in firearms, baton, and security guard training to security personnel.

Alarm companies sell, install, service, maintain, and monitor alarm systems for individuals, businesses, and public entities. Alarm company operators also respond to burglar alarms. Retail outlets that only sell alarm systems do not need BSIS licensing.

Private patrol operators provide services to protect people and/or property

according to a contract. Security guards are employees of private patrol operators.

Repossession agencies recover personal property for a registered owner or lien holder. Repossessors are used when a consumer defaults on a certain type of loan, usually for a car, boat, motorcycle, or recreational vehicle.

More information on licensing requirements, BSIS-approved training facilities, and related matters is available on the BSIS Web site, www.bsis.ca.gov, or by calling BSIS at (916) 322-4000.

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