

The Texas Property Manager's Guide to Hiring and Verifying a Licensed Security Company

A free public resource for property managers, HOA boards, apartment operators, contractors, and commercial property owners in Texas

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Who This Guide Is For

Texas has more than 92,000 licensed security guards and thousands of registered security companies. Not all are equally qualified, properly licensed, or adequately insured. Whether you are hiring security for the first time or re-evaluating a current vendor, this guide will help you make an informed decision.

This resource is designed for:

- Property managers overseeing commercial or residential buildings
- HOA and community association board members
- Apartment complex owners and operators
- Construction companies and general contractors
- Commercial property and facility managers
- Event coordinators and venue operators
- Business owners evaluating security options

Every external link in this document points to an official government source so you can verify the information yourself.

1. Understanding Texas Private Security Licensing

All private security in Texas is regulated by the **Private Security Bureau (PSB)**, a division of the Texas Department of Public Safety. The governing law is **Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 1702**, known as the Private Security Act.

Source: [Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 1702](#) | [DPS Private Security Bureau](#)

What the License Levels Mean

Level II — Non-Commissioned (Unarmed) Security Officer

- Standard license for unarmed security guards
- Requires a 6-hour training course covering Texas security law, ethics, conflict resolution, use of force, and report writing
- Requires passing a written exam
- Requires an FBI fingerprint-based criminal background check
- Must be sponsored by a licensed employer through the state's online system

Level III — Commissioned (Armed) Security Officer

- Authorizes a guard to carry a firearm while on duty
- Requires completion of Level II first
- Minimum 45 hours of additional training including firearms proficiency, legal use of force, and self-defense tactics
- Requires a psychological evaluation (MMPI)
- Firearms qualification and self-defense training must be completed in person with a DPS-approved instructor
- As of January 1, 2024, HB 3424 strengthened these requirements by mandating in-person training and psychological evaluation for all new and renewing commissioned officers

Level IV — Personal Protection Officer

- Highest individual license level, for executive protection and bodyguard work
- Requires completion of both Level II and Level III
- Additional 15 hours of specialized, in-person training

Company Licenses vs. Individual Licenses

A legitimate security company holds its own company license from DPS. Each guard working for that company also holds an individual license at the appropriate level. When hiring a vendor, verify both the company's license and the individual licenses of officers assigned to your property.

What "Commissioned" and "Non-Commissioned" Mean

Non-commissioned = the officer is not authorized to carry a firearm on duty.

Commissioned = the officer is authorized to carry a firearm and has completed additional training, firearms qualification, and a psychological evaluation.

2. How to Verify a Security Company's License

The Texas DPS maintains a free, public online tool called **TOPS (Texas Online Private Security)** that allows anyone to look up the license status of a security company or individual officer.

Step-by-Step Verification

1. Go to [TOPS Public License Search](#)
2. Select whether you are searching for a **Business, Individual, or Training School**
3. Enter the company name, individual name, or license number
4. Review the results:
 - **License status:** Look for "Active." Any other status (Inactive, Suspended, Revoked, Expired) is a concern.
 - **License type:** Confirm it matches the services being offered.
 - **Expiration date:** Confirm the license is not about to expire.

If a company does not appear in TOPS at all, that is a significant red flag. All companies legally providing private security services in Texas must be registered. Ask for their license number directly and search again. If they cannot provide one, do not hire them.

Verify Individual Officers Too

You have the right to ask a vendor for the names of officers assigned to your property and verify each one in TOPS. Every commissioned (armed) officer should carry a physical pocket card or be able to show active status through the system.

3. Insurance and Bonding: What Texas Law Requires

Texas Occupations Code Section 1702.124 establishes minimum insurance requirements for every licensed security company. A company without this coverage is either not properly licensed or operating in violation of state law.

Minimum Coverage Requirements

Coverage Type	Minimum Amount
Bodily injury and property damage	\$100,000 per occurrence
Personal injury	\$50,000 per occurrence
Aggregate (all occurrences)	\$200,000 total

Every licensed company must also maintain a **surety bond** on file with DPS. If insurance or the bond lapses, DPS can immediately suspend the company's license.

Source: [Texas Occupations Code, Sections 1702.123–1702.125](#)

What You Should Ask For

- **Certificate of Insurance (COI)** showing current general liability coverage

- Ask that your property be named as an **additional insured** on their policy
- Confirm coverage meets or exceeds the state minimums above
- Ask whether they carry **workers' compensation insurance** (not required for all Texas employers, but important for your liability protection)

Why This Matters to You

If an uninsured or underinsured guard is injured on your property, or causes harm to a third party, inadequate vendor insurance could expose you to significant liability. Verifying insurance is one of the most important steps in vendor selection.

4. Background Checks and Fingerprinting

Every person who applies for a Texas private security license must undergo a **fingerprint-based FBI criminal history background check**. This is not a simple name-based check. It runs the applicant's fingerprints through both state (DPS) and federal (FBI) criminal databases.

How the Process Works

1. The applicant submits their license application through TOPS
2. Within approximately one hour, they receive an email from IdentoGO (the exclusive fingerprint provider for Texas DPS) with a unique enrollment ID
3. The applicant schedules an appointment at an [IdentoGO enrollment center](#)
4. Fingerprints are captured electronically and transmitted to DPS and the FBI
5. DPS reviews the criminal history results as part of the licensing decision

Source: [DPS Fingerprinting Instructions](#)

What This Means for You as a Client

When you hire a properly licensed security company, every officer assigned to your property has been fingerprinted and cleared through a federal background check. Unlicensed or improperly licensed companies cannot provide this level of vetting.

If a vendor says their guards are "background checked" but cannot confirm they are individually licensed through DPS, the check may be a less thorough commercial screening rather than the FBI fingerprint-based process required by Texas law.

5. Fire Watch: When You Need It and What to Look For

Fire watch is a specific type of security assignment required under federal and state regulations when fire protection systems are impaired or certain work creates fire hazards.

When Fire Watch Is Required

During hot work (welding, cutting, brazing):

Under OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.252, fire watch is required whenever welding or cutting is performed and any of these conditions exist:

- Combustible materials are within 35 feet of the work area
- Combustibles beyond 35 feet could be ignited by sparks
- Openings in walls or floors within 35 feet expose combustibles in adjacent areas
- Combustibles on the opposite side of partitions could ignite through heat conduction

Fire watch must continue for at least **30 minutes after hot work is completed**.

Source: [OSHA 29 CFR 1910.252](#) | [OSHA Fire Watch Quick Card \(PDF\)](#)

During fire protection system impairment:

- Fire alarm system out for more than 4 hours in a 24-hour period
- Water-based fire suppression system out for more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period
- Any time the local fire marshal or Authority Having Jurisdiction orders it

Source: [Texas State Fire Marshal's Office](#)

What Fire Watch Personnel Must Do

- Maintain a continuous presence in the assigned area
- Carry and know how to operate fire extinguishing equipment
- Know how to activate the building's fire alarm system
- Monitor for fire hazards and incipient fires
- Document all patrols, observations, and incidents
- Not perform any other duties during the fire watch assignment

What to Confirm When Hiring for Fire Watch

- Licensed, trained personnel familiar with fire watch protocols
- Documented patrol logs that meet local fire marshal requirements
- Understanding of OSHA and NFPA standards
- Ability to coordinate with your fire alarm monitoring company and local fire department

6. Special Considerations for HOAs and Residential Communities

What HOAs Cannot Restrict

Texas Property Code Section 202.023 (effective September 1, 2021) prohibits HOAs in residential subdivisions and townhome communities from banning property owners from installing security

measures, including:

- Security cameras
- Motion detectors
- Perimeter fencing

HOAs can still regulate fencing type, camera placement (e.g., cameras must face the owner's property), and reasonable aesthetic standards. But they cannot prohibit these security measures outright.

Source: [Texas Property Code, Chapter 202](#) (Note: Section 202.023 does not apply to condominium associations.)

Contracting Security for Common Areas

Under **Texas Property Code Chapter 204**, property owners' associations have the authority to contract with security companies for common area patrol and protection. When doing so, the board should:

- Follow the same licensing, insurance, and verification steps in this guide
- Ensure the contract clearly defines scope of work, patrol routes, reporting, and response protocols
- Confirm the vendor's insurance covers operations on your community's common areas
- Communicate transparently with residents about what security services include and do not include

Funding Security Through Assessments

Texas Property Code Chapter 209 governs how HOAs collect and manage assessments. Security services funded through assessments are subject to the same transparency requirements as any other association expenditure. Document the vendor selection process and be prepared to explain it to the membership.

Source: [Texas Property Code, Chapter 209](#)

7. Red Flags When Evaluating a Security Vendor

No verifiable license in TOPS. If a company does not appear in the state's public license database, they may not be licensed. This is the single most important thing to check.

Refuses to provide a Certificate of Insurance. A properly licensed and insured company will provide this without hesitation. Reluctance is a serious concern.

Guards without individual credentials. Every Texas security officer should hold a valid individual license. Armed officers must carry a pocket card or show active status. If a company cannot confirm this, proceed with caution.

No written contract or scope of work. Professional security companies provide detailed contracts specifying services, schedules, reporting, and response protocols. A handshake agreement is not sufficient.

Pricing significantly below market rates. Security involves real costs: licensing, training, insurance, payroll taxes, supervision, and equipment. The average hourly wage for security guards in Texas is approximately \$18.00/hour ([BLS](#)). A company billing well below a sustainable rate should prompt additional scrutiny.

No documented training program. Ask how the company trains officers, how often training is updated, and whether they exceed state minimums.

Cannot provide references from similar properties. A company with relevant experience should be able to provide references without difficulty.

No clear reporting or communication procedures. Professional companies provide regular reports, use documented communication channels, and have established incident reporting and escalation processes.

8. Security Vendor Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist when evaluating any private security company in Texas. Print this section or use it as a reference during vendor interviews.

Licensing

- Company appears in TOPS with "Active" license status
- Company license type matches services being offered
- Company can provide their DPS license number on request
- Individual officers hold valid individual licenses
- Armed officers hold active Level III (Commissioned) licenses
- Company license is not expiring within the next 60 days

Insurance and Bonding

- Company provides a current Certificate of Insurance (COI)
- Liability coverage meets or exceeds Texas minimums (\$100K / \$50K / \$200K)
- Company agrees to name your property as additional insured
- Surety bond is active and on file with DPS
- Company carries workers' compensation insurance

Background Checks and Training

- All officers completed FBI fingerprint-based background checks through DPS
- Company has a documented training program beyond state minimums
- Armed officers completed firearms proficiency and psychological evaluation
- Company provides ongoing or refresher training

Operations

- Company provides a detailed written contract and scope of work
- Contract specifies patrol schedules, post orders, and response protocols
- Company provides regular written reports (daily activity, incident reports)
- Company has a clear escalation and emergency response procedure
- Company assigns a dedicated account manager or supervisor
- Company has a plan for covering absences and shift vacancies

References and Reputation

- Company provides references from properties similar to yours
- References confirm reliability, professionalism, and responsiveness
- No unresolved complaints with the DPS Private Security Bureau
- Professional online presence consistent with a legitimate operation

9. Additional Resources

Texas State Resources

Resource	Link
DPS Private Security Bureau	dps.texas.gov/section/private-security
TOPS License Verification	tops.portal.texas.gov
Texas Occupations Code, Ch. 1702	statutes.capitol.texas.gov
DPS Statutes and Rules (PDF)	dps.texas.gov (PDF)
DPS Fingerprinting Instructions	dps.texas.gov
Texas State Fire Marshal's Office	tdi.texas.gov/fire
Texas Property Code, Ch. 202	statutes.capitol.texas.gov
Texas Property Code, Ch. 209	statutes.capitol.texas.gov
Texas Workforce Commission	twc.texas.gov
Texas Career Check (Security Guards)	texascareercheck.com

Federal Resources

Resource	Link
OSHA Fire Watch Standards (1910.252)	osha.gov
OSHA Fire Watch Quick Card (PDF)	osha.gov (PDF)
Bureau of Labor Statistics – Security Guards	bls.gov
IdentoGO Fingerprint Enrollment (Texas)	uenroll.identogo.com

10. About This Guide

This guide was created and is maintained by **Mayer Security**, a licensed private security company serving Houston and communities throughout Texas. We built this resource because we believe informed clients make better security decisions, and the industry benefits when every provider is held to proper standards.

We specialize in security guard services, fire watch, patrol, access control, and security consulting for commercial properties, residential communities, construction sites, and special events.

If you have questions about hiring a security vendor or need a licensed, insured security provider for your property, we are happy to help.

[Contact Mayer Security](#)

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