

CAREER GUIDE FOR POLICE PATROL OFFICERS

SOC Code: 33-3051.01

Pay Bands: 3 – 5 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Patrol assigned area to enforce laws and ordinances, regulate traffic, control crowds, prevent crime, and arrest violators.

Police Patrol Officer positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Law Enforcement Career Group](#):

[Law Enforcement Officer I](#)

[Law Enforcement Officer II](#)

[Law Enforcement Officer III](#)

The Virginia Department of State Police and the state colleges and universities are the primary employers of Police Patrol Officers in the Commonwealth.

While Police Patrol Officers within the Commonwealth are all located within the Law Enforcement Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Groups that may be of interest are:

[Emergency Services](#)

[Forensic Science](#)

[Probation and Parole](#)

[Public Safety Compliance](#)

[Security Services](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police Patrol Officers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
2. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
3. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
4. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
5. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
6. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
7. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

8. Bringing others together and trying to reconcile differences.
9. Persuading others to change their minds or behavior.
10. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
11. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
12. Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
13. Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
14. Actively looking for ways to help people.
15. Managing one's own time and the time of others.
16. Teaching others how to do something.
17. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
18. Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
19. Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police Patrol Officers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.
2. Relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
3. The structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
4. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
5. Human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
6. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
7. Business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
8. Transmission, broadcasting, switching, control, and operation of telecommunications systems.
9. The principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Police Patrol Officers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
3. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
4. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
5. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
6. See details at a distance.
7. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
8. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
9. Identify or detect a known pattern (a figure, object, word, or sound) that is hidden in other distracting material.
10. Choose quickly between two or more movements in response to two or more different signals (lights, sounds, pictures). It includes the speed with which the correct response is started with the hand, foot, or other body part.
11. Quickly respond (with the hand, finger, or foot) to a signal (sound, light, picture) when it appears.
12. Quickly make sense of, combine, and organize information into meaningful patterns.
13. Shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).
14. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
15. Time your movements or the movement of a piece of equipment in anticipation of changes in the speed and/or direction of a moving object or scene.
16. Coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.
17. Quickly and repeatedly adjust the controls of a machine or a vehicle to exact positions.
18. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
19. Concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted.
20. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Police Patrol Officers. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Provide for public safety by maintaining order, responding to emergencies, protecting people and property, enforcing motor vehicle and criminal laws, and promoting good community relations.
2. Identify, pursue, and arrest suspects and perpetrators of criminal acts.
3. Record facts to prepare reports that document incidents and activities.

4. Review facts of incidents to determine if criminal act or statute violations were involved.
5. Render aid to accident victims and other persons requiring first aid for physical injuries.
6. Testify in court to present evidence or act as witness in traffic and criminal cases.
7. Evaluate complaint and emergency-request information to determine response requirements.
8. Patrol specific area on foot, horseback, or motorized conveyance, responding promptly to calls for assistance.
9. Monitor, note, report, and investigate suspicious persons and situations, safety hazards, and unusual or illegal activity in patrol area.
10. Investigate traffic accidents and other accidents to determine causes and to determine if a crime has been committed.
11. Photograph or draw diagrams of crime or accident scenes and interview principals and eyewitnesses.
12. Monitor traffic to ensure motorists observe traffic regulations and exhibit safe driving procedures.
13. Relay complaint and emergency request information to appropriate agency dispatchers.
14. Issue citations or warnings to violators of motor vehicle ordinances.
15. Direct traffic flow and reroute traffic in case of emergencies.
16. Inform citizens of community services and recommend options to facilitate longer-term problem resolution.
17. Provide road information to assist motorists.
18. Process prisoners, and prepare and maintain records of prisoner bookings and prisoner status during booking and pre-trial process.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Police Patrol Officer work is considered both Realistic and Social. It is “**Realistic**” because it frequently involves work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. It is “**Social**” because it frequently involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Police Patrol Officer positions in state government. However, to improve career advancement opportunities you should consider the advantages of certification and include this step in your self-development plan.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Occupations like Police Patrol Officers usually require some previous work-related skill and knowledge in addition to specialized training. Usually, specialized training is required if accepted by the hiring agency. Employees in these occupations usually need one or two years of training involving both on-the-job experience and informal training with experienced workers.

This occupation often involves using your knowledge and skills to help others and may involve coordinating or training others.

Most Police Patrol Officer jobs require that candidates be at least 21 years of age and have graduated from high school or received their GED. US citizenship may also be required. Applicants should expect to undergo a background investigation that may include educational achievements, prior work experience, character and reputation, credit history and police record. A valid driver's license and a good driving record are required. Successful completion of an officers' training program is required. Please check with the hiring agency for specific job requirements.

Successful applicants for a position with the Virginia Department of State Police will attend the Virginia State Police Academy at http://www.vsp.state.va.us/personnel_training.htm. Check directly with other Virginia agencies regarding qualifications and training.

There is one recognized apprenticeable specialty associated with this occupation: Police Officer I. To learn about specific apprenticeship opportunities, please contact the U.S. Department of Labor's Virginia office at:

USDOL/ETA/OATELS-BAT
400 North 8th Street
Federal Building - Suite 404
Richmond, Virginia 23219-23240
804-771-2488

For general information about apprenticeships, training, and partnerships with business, visit the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) website at http://www.doleta.gov/atels_bat/ or go to <http://www.doli.state.va.us> (Virginia Department of Labor and Industry).

Sources of educational, training, and learning opportunities include:

1. US Military Service
2. On-the-job Training
3. Virginia Community College System
4. A business school
5. Talk to a supervisor or supervisor whom you believe "has it all together".

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise

2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next higher role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example:

Pay Band	Practitioner Role		Pay Band	Manager Role
3	Law Enforcement Officer I			
	↓			
4	Law Enforcement Officer II			
	↓			
5	Law Enforcement Officer III	→	5	Law Enforcement Manager I
				↓
			6	Law Enforcement Manager II

Sample Career Path

[Law Enforcement Officer I](#)

The Law Enforcement Officer I role provides career tracks for police officers that exercise general police powers within a limited jurisdiction or assigned regulatory area. These officers perform law enforcement, crime prevention, security, and related public safety functions within state controlled property, such as an educational institution, mental health facility, or other state agency.

[Law Enforcement Officer II](#)

The Law Enforcement Officer II role provides career tracks for law enforcement officers ranging from probationary status to complete agency training programs and certification to fully sworn officers performing journey to senior law enforcement activities. Duties may include independent patrols, inspections, investigations, arrests, search and rescue operations, evidence compilation and preservation, reports, testifying in judicial proceedings, educational presentations, and training. Work assignments are performed either within a limited jurisdiction, an assigned regulatory area, or have statewide jurisdiction.

[Law Enforcement Officer III](#)

The Law Enforcement Officer III role provides career tracks for officers that exercise the highest level of judgment, maturity, and expertise to perform specialized enforcement and support functions and/or supervision of others. Employees typically serve as special agents responsible for the most complex cases involving murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, embezzlement, narcotics, money laundering, financial fraud and similarly severe criminal acts; as officers responsible for installing, maintaining, and operating surveillance and computer equipment in support of criminal investigations; as officers responsible for performing law enforcement duties and operating single-engine and/or multi-engine fixed and/or rotor wing aircraft for law enforcement, emergency evacuation, surveillance, and search and rescue missions; and as supervisors of significant law enforcement education or training programs.

[Law Enforcement Manager I](#)

The Law Enforcement Manager I role provides career tracks for managers that range from first line supervisors responsible for work activities within a specific program or geographical area to managers performing work through subordinate supervisors in a specific jurisdiction, geographic region, or statewide basis. Employees plan, organize, and direct enforcement activities to achieve goals and objectives usually within well-defined resource allocations. May prepare budgets and authorizing expenditures; review and complete administrative reports; and coordinate staff, programs, and equipment for the accomplishment of agency's objectives.

[Law Enforcement Manager II](#)

The Law Enforcement Manager II role provides career tracks for managers ranging from mid-level supervisors, responsible for supervising investigative staff or a specialized unit, to senior command managers managing major law enforcement programs and a large staff. Senior managers in this role manage programs with multiple components and subordinate managers requiring extensive managerial competencies. Duties may include managing and directing law enforcement, criminal, and administrative operations; coordinating and directing complex criminal investigations; planning, monitoring, and evaluating budgets and allocation of

resources; and managing communications, administrative support, and staff training and development programs.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Department of Professional & Occupation Regulation

<http://www.state.va.us/dpor/indexie.html>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>