



Fact Sheet



Public Affairs Division - Washington, DC

Contact: Robert J. Browning
Chief, Public Affairs Division
202-648-8500

September 2008
www.atf.gov

ATF CERTIFIED EXPLOSIVES SPECIALISTS (CES)

Purpose

The primary mission of the CESs is to conduct thorough investigations into violations of the federal explosives laws and support the efforts of state and local authorities and ATF's industry operations investigators (IOI). This is accomplished through advanced training and education in explosives and all facets of the commercial explosives industry, as well as specialized job experiences.

Goal

The goal of the CES program is to support ATF's work in enforcing the federal explosives laws and protecting the public from criminal acts and unsafe storage of explosives. The efforts of the CESs support ATF's and the Department of Justice's strategic goals of preventing terrorism and promoting the nation's security.

Responsibilities

CESs must maintain a working knowledge of military and commercial explosives, as well as homemade or improvised explosive devices. As ATF's primary investigative resource on explosives, CESs are responsible for responding to all explosions, conducting explosives recovery and disposal operations, participating in liaison activities with other public safety entities, and delivering courtroom testimony within their area of expertise. CESs support national security special events such as political conventions and major sports competitions. Additionally, they deliver training for ATF personnel, private- and public-sector safety entities, and other law enforcement, military, and international partners.

Candidacy and Training

A special agent who is interested in becoming a CES must apply to be an explosives specialist candidate. Accepted candidates are assigned an experienced CES as a mentor and enter a two-year candidacy program. Also, CES candidates must successfully complete the three-week ATF CES Basic Course.

In addition to the CES Basic Course, the CES candidate must successfully complete the Hazardous Materials course delivered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ATF's Advanced Explosives Destruction course, ATF's Post Blast Investigation course, and the International Society of Explosives Engineers Blasters Certification. During their candidacy, CESs must also participate in explosives-related investigations, disposal operations, and explosives demonstrations.

Once attaining CES status, a special agent must successfully recertify every two years, which involves standardized practical skills testing and a two-week course. There are currently 252 CESs in the United States, Puerto Rico, Thailand, and Colombia.

CES Bomb Technicians

A CES who successfully completes the Hazardous Device School, a six-week course at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., qualifies as a CES bomb technician (CESBT). A CESBT may render safe or disarm destructive devices when in the interest of the public safety, conduct large-scale explosives destruction operations, execute and interpret device X-rays, and assemble live and inert explosive/incendiary devices for training purposes. ATF currently has five CESBTs.

Explosives Detection Canine Handlers

Special agents who handle explosives detection canines are fully functioning CESs. They are held to the same responsibility and training requirements as non-handler CESs. There are currently 32 CES canine handlers.

Other ATF Resources

In addition to CESs, ATF contributes the expertise of its explosives enforcement officers, the U.S. Bomb Data Center, the National Response Team, three forensic science laboratories, and explosives detection canines to explosives incidents and criminal investigations. Also, IOIs are responsible for regulating and inspecting licensed explosives industry members.

For more information on ATF programs, go to www.atf.gov.

###