



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN BEING PROCESSED FOR A DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY SECURITY CLEARANCE OR ACCESS AUTHORIZATION

INTRODUCTION

This overview will help individuals new to the process understand what it means to obtain and maintain a Department of Energy (DOE) security clearance or access authorization. You are a part of a select group of individuals who are being considered for access to classified information maintained by DOE.



WHAT IS CLASSIFIED INFORMATION?

As you know, the protection of classified information is very important to our national security. Generally, classified information is official information or material that requires protection in the interest of national security. Such information includes that which relates to the national defense and foreign relations of the United States. There are three basic levels of classified information: Top Secret, Secret, and Confidential. If classified information is mishandled or given to the wrong person, it could harm our country's security or that of our allies.



WHAT IS A SECURITY CLEARANCE/ ACCESS AUTHORIZATION?

A security clearance is an administrative determination that an individual is eligible for access to classified information. An access authorization is an administrative determination that an individual is eligible for access to particular types or categories of DOE classified information or material. Unless otherwise

indicated, the term security clearance encompasses access authorizations throughout this guidance. Common sense and personal experience tell us that not all people are equally trustworthy. Security clearances are decisions by the government that someone is reliable and trustworthy enough to protect classified information. Not everyone qualifies for access to classified information, only those individuals determined to be acceptable security risks are permitted to handle such information.



IF I AM AUTHORIZED ACCESS, CAN I SEE ALL CLASSIFIED INFORMATION?

No. Access to classified information is granted based on the level of access authorized and what specific classified information you need to know in order to do your job. This is called the "need-to-know" principle.



HOW DO I OBTAIN A SECURITY CLEARANCE?

First, DOE has to identify the position for which you have applied as one requiring access to classified information. You cannot nominate yourself for such access; requests for access must come from within DOE. Once DOE has determined the position requires access to classified information, you will then be asked to complete a personnel security questionnaire and provide your fingerprints. Your servicing DOE personnel security office will then send them to an investigating agency to conduct an investigation of your background. The type of investigation requested depends upon what level of

access you will require. Once the investigation is completed, it will be reviewed by trained adjudicators, who are authorized to make security clearance determinations.



WHAT BACKGROUND AREAS ARE CHECKED?

Although different investigations are used for different levels of access, they address the same types of information, including, but not limited to:

- Where you have lived
- Schools you have attended
- Your employment history
- Reference checks
- Your military service record
- Foreign activities and travel
- Your credit/financial history
- Police records
- Any drug and alcohol abuse
- Any personal conduct issues



HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?

Because of the number of variables involved, there is no definitive answer to this question. The kind of investigation conducted will depend on the level of access required, and some kinds of background investigations typically take longer to complete than others. In addition, some individuals have more varied backgrounds than other individuals and, consequently, more time is required to conduct a complete investigation. If complicated issues are involved, it can take even longer.



HOW MUCH PERSONAL INFORMATION DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?

How much personal information you will be required to provide depends upon the type of investigation requested. When asked to fill out a security questionnaire, you will have to provide addresses of where you lived and worked, as well as addresses and telephone numbers of supervisors, personal references, roommates, etc. In addition, you will be asked to provide details regarding any incidents you have been involved in that may be of a

security concern, such as arrests, credit problems, alcohol abuse, illegal drug use, or any other matter that could raise a question regarding your reliability and trustworthiness. Investigators will use this information to conduct the investigation. You should provide accurate, complete, and honest answers to all questions on your security questionnaire. Falsifying or failing to provide required information can cause an unfavorable security clearance determination. Remember, the information you provide will be verified during your investigation.



HOW IS THE SECURITY CLEARANCE DETERMINATION MADE?

When your investigation is completed, it is sent to a DOE adjudicative site, where trained adjudicators will review all of the information, both favorable and unfavorable, and assess it to determine if you are eligible for access. If there is no adverse information in your background, a favorable security clearance determination will be made. If adverse information is developed, you will be contacted to obtain more information. If the adverse information cannot be favorably resolved, your security clearance may not be granted. DOE is committed to ensuring that the process is fair and that unfavorable determinations are not made without people getting a chance to give their side of the story - to explain or rebut the adverse information. In addition, if an unfavorable determination is made, the individual can appeal the decision to an independent DOE appeal board.



WHAT IF I WANT ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL SECURITY INFORMATION?

If desired, additional information regarding the investigative process can be obtained at <http://www.opm.gov/faq/topic/investigate/index.aspx?cid=56d6e92e-6e27-4b6a-8969-4a7a1bfba76d>. If you are selected for a position requiring access to classified information maintained by DOE, you will be provided specific guidance for completing a security questionnaire by the DOE personnel security office supporting the location for that position. The security office representative can also answer any additional questions you may have at that time.