

Public Safety Terminology: Law Enforcement Tier Systems

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Issue

As part of a series on public safety terminology, you asked for examples of states that regulate the basic training and certification of police and other law enforcement officers by classifying them into different groups or tiers.

Summary

Missouri, Nevada, and Vermont are three examples of states that use a tier-type system to train and certify their law enforcement. These states use, respectively, eight, four, and three certification tiers. Missouri's tiers were set up administratively by regulation, while Nevada's and Vermont's were statutorily enacted. Each state generally has one tier for regular police and similar law enforcement officers and one or more tiers for officers with narrower authority. The hour requirements for basic training for these tiers correspondingly increase alongside officer responsibilities. For example, an A-HP certification in Missouri to be a peace officer capable of almost every commission in the state requires at least 1,000 hours of training, while an R certification to be a reserve officer requires at least 297 hours.

Missouri

Officer Terminology

Existing law generally requires a license to act as a peace officer in Missouri ([Mo. Stat. § 590.020](#)). By law, a "peace officer" is a state or local law enforcement officer who has the power to arrest people breaking criminal laws, or someone otherwise declared or deemed a peace officer by

statute, and a “reserve peace officer” is a peace officer who regularly works less than 30 hours a week ([Mo. Stat. § 590.010](#)).

Tiers

State statutes require the Missouri (1) Department of Public Safety director to establish various classes of peace officer licenses ([Mo. Stat. § 590.020](#)), and (2) Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) to establish minimum standards for the basic training of peace officers that may vary by license class ([Mo. Stat. § 590.030](#)).

State regulations establish the following license classes for Missouri peace officers:

1. Class A, valid for any commission (a grant of authority to act as a peace officer), except the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Missouri Conservation Commission;
2. Class A-HP, valid for any commission, except the Missouri Conservation Commission;
3. Class A-CC, valid only for the Missouri Conservation Commission;
4. Class B, valid for any commission, except first class counties with a charter form of government (or political subdivisions within them), cities not within a county, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, or the Missouri Conservation Commission;
5. Class C, valid only for commission within third class counties according to a certain process;
6. Class D, valid only for commission as a reserve peace officer within a county having more than one million inhabitants and with either a charter form of government or of a certain classification;
7. Class R, valid only for commission as a reserve peace officer under certain commissioning authorities, with police powers limited by the commissioning authority, including by being under the direct supervision of a commissioned officer who holds a valid class A, B, or C license;
8. Class S, valid only for the continuing licensure of a person holding and exercising a law enforcement commission requiring a peace officer license according to a specified process ([Mo. Code Regs. tit. 11, § 75-13.010](#)).

Basic Training Hours

Existing law sets the following minimum hours of basic training: (1) Class A: 600 hours; (2) Class A-HP: 1,000 hours; (3) Class A-CC: 1,000 hours; (4) Class B: 480 hours; (5) Class C: 120 hours; (6) Class R: 297 hours; and (7) Class S: 480 hours ([Mo. Code Regs. tit. 11, § 75-14.030](#); see also [Mo. Stat. § 590.040](#)). (The regulations do not specify a minimum number of hours for Class D licenses,

but the statute requires at least 120 hours for any license class restricted to commission as a reserve peace officer with police powers limited to the commissioning political subdivision.)

Nevada

Officer Terminology

Existing law generally requires a certification to work as a peace officer in Nevada ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.550](#)). By law, a “peace officer” is generally anyone working a specified position ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.010](#)). This includes marshals, police officers, correctional officers, and several others ([Nev. Rev. Stat. §§ 289.150 to 289.360](#)).

Tiers

State statutes require Nevada’s POST to adopt regulations establishing minimum standards for basic training for category I, category II, and category III peace officers and reserve peace officers ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.510](#)). The statutes define these peace officer categories as follows:

1. category I is a peace officer who has unrestricted duties and is not otherwise a category II or III peace officer ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.460](#));
2. category II is someone working as one of over a dozen specified positions, including certain bailiffs, constables, and investigators ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.470](#)); and
3. category III is a peace officer whose authority is limited to correctional services, including Department of Corrections superintendents and correctional officers, and is not otherwise a category II peace officer ([Nev. Rev. Stat. § 289.480](#)).

State statutes do not define “reserve peace officer,” but, under state regulations, a “reserve officer” is any peace officer who performs some of the duties of a peace officer in the immediate supervision of a certified officer and who is not employed by an agency on a full-time basis ([Nev. Admin. Code § 289.065](#)).

State regulations describe the training for the groups of peace officers as follows:

1. training category I includes peace officers who are empowered by law to perform a broad spectrum of law enforcement duties and whose primary functions specifically include (a) routine patrol, (b) criminal investigations, (c) enforcement of traffic laws, and (d) crash investigations;
2. training category II includes peace officers whose authority or primary duties are limited to a specific or specialized area of law enforcement;

3. training category III includes peace officers whose legal authority and primary duties are limited to the care and custody of adults and juveniles in a state or local correctional or detention facility; and
4. training category reserve officer includes peace officers who are reserve officers and who are assigned to an agency that employs category I, category II, or category III peace officers ([Nev. Admin. Code § 289.130](#)).

Basic Training Hours

The minimum hours of basic training for each category are: (1) category I: 480 hours, (2) category II: 200 hours, (3) category III: 160 hours, and (4) reserve officers: 120 hours ([Nev. Admin. Code §§ 289.140 to 289.170](#)).

Vermont

Existing law generally requires a certification to work as a law enforcement officer in Vermont ([Vt. Stat. tit. 20, § 2358](#)). By law, a “law enforcement officer” is generally anyone working a specified position, such as a State Police member, municipal police officer, sheriff, and several others ([Vt. Stat. tit. 20, § 2351a](#)).

Tiers

State statutes require the Vermont Criminal Justice Council (CJC) to offer or approve basic training for three levels of law enforcement officer certification. The statutes set these levels according to an officer’s scope of practice as follows:

1. Level I for officers generally limited to security, transport, vehicle escorts, and traffic control;
2. Level II for officers generally with Level I duties and the authority to investigate over 30 specified criminal and civil laws (for example, certain drug possessions, fraud, larceny and embezzlement, weapons, trespass and malicious injuries to property, and the violation of municipal ordinances); and
3. Level III for officers with all law enforcement authority ([Vt. Stat. tit. 20, § 2358](#)).

Basic Training Hours

By law, the CJC sets the minimum hours of basic training for each level annually ([Vt. Admin. Code §§ 6-1-1:15, 6-1-1:17, & 6-1-1:19](#)). According to this [CJC webpage](#), Level I and II certificates are currently earned through a three-phase process beginning with a minimum of 80 hours in an academy, then at least 60 hours of additional training consisting of required and elective courses, and finally 120 hours of field training and evaluation program with a council certified field training

officer. For Level III certifications, individuals must attend a 17-week comprehensive Basic Training Academy, which currently totals [874 hours](#).

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