



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Recruitment, Diversity and Hiring Division

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## **SPECIAL AGENT INFORMATIONAL PACKET**

**BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES  
SPECIAL AGENT  
Grades 5, 7, and 9**

### **WANT TO BE A SPECIAL AGENT?**

The career of a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) special agent is unique and one of the most challenging in Federal law enforcement. Headquartered in Washington, DC, ATF has field offices throughout the United States and its territories. Highly trained special agents are responsible for investigating violations of Federal law relating to firearms, explosives, arson, and alcohol and tobacco diversion. These investigations involve surveillance, interviewing suspects and witnesses, making arrests, obtaining and executing search warrants, and searching for physical evidence.

The profession of a special agent is exciting and rewarding. Special agents must be tough - both physically and mentally. They must also be able to handle rigorous training, personal risks, irregular hours and extensive travel. Special agents are subject to reassignment to any ATF office in the United States, to include U.S. territories.

**Please review the enclosed information regarding salary and benefits, basic requirements and conditions of employment.**

**Applications for position openings will ONLY be accepted in response to a specific ATF job opportunity announcement.**

**For updates on ATF special agent recruitment efforts, please visit our website at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov) or contact a recruiter in a local ATF field division.**

**ATF is looking for energetic, innovative, solution-oriented professionals to assist the ATF team in its mission to prevent terrorism, reduce violent crime and protect the public.**

*The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer*

## POSITION INFORMATION

- **Position Title and Grade Levels:** Criminal Investigator (Special Agent), GL-1811, grades 5, 7, and 9.

- **Major Duties:**

- Investigate criminal violations of Federal laws within the enforcement jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Justice.
- Conduct investigations of violations relating to explosives, firearms, arson, and alcohol and tobacco diversion.
- Gather and analyze evidence through investigative leads, seizures and arrests, execution of search warrants, and a variety of other means.
- Prepare concise criminal investigative case reports.
- Testify for the Federal Government in court and before grand juries.

- **Work Schedule:**

ATF's business hours are generally 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, a special agent's work schedule and number of hours worked per day or week will vary according to assignments. (For compensation see Law Enforcement Availability Pay in the Salary and Benefits section of this informational packet.)

- **Travel:** Travel may be considerable, depending upon assignments.

## BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- Must be a U.S. citizen
- Male applicants born after December 31, 1959, must be registered with the Selective Service System, or be exempt from having to do so under Selective Service law.
- **Law Enforcement Age Requirement:** Applicants must be at least 21 years of age and not older than 37 at the time of appointment.

In accordance with Public Law 100-238, this position is covered under law enforcement retirement provisions; therefore, candidates must be appointed before reaching their 37th birthday unless they are a preference eligible veteran OR presently serving or have previously served in a Federal civilian law enforcement retirement-covered position (after subtracting the years/months of prior Federal service worked in a primary law enforcement position, applicants must be less than 37 years of age). The maximum entry age limit was established under the age discrimination prohibitions contained in Section 15 of the Age Discrimination and Employment Act.

- Possess a current and valid automobile operator's license.
- This position requires the incumbent to carry a firearm and ammunition, and qualify and maintain firearms proficiency. Persons who have been convicted of felonies and certain misdemeanors, including a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence (Title 18, U.S.C. section 922 (g)(9)) are not eligible to possess a firearm or ammunition

## CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- Complete an ATF special agent applicant questionnaire (at time of application).
- Take and pass the ATF Special Agent Examination.
- Take and pass the ATF Special Agent Applicant Assessment Test.
- Take and pass the Pre-employment Physical Task Test which is composed of three elements (sit-ups, push-ups and 1.5 mile run), with a minimum score.
- Appear for and successfully complete a panel interview – a writing sample will be required.
- Be in compliance with ATF's drug policy for special agent applicants.
- Take and pass a medical examination by an authorized Government physician and meet medical requirements.
- Applicants must be able to perform physically strenuous duties safely.
- Weight must be in proportion to height.
- Take and pass a drug test.
- Take and successfully complete a polygraph examination.
- Successfully complete a background investigation for a top secret security clearance. A periodic reinvestigation every 5 years will also be conducted.
- Applicants will be required to sign a mobility statement and may be relocated at any time to any office in the United States, to include U.S. territories.
- Payment of relocation expenses to the first appointment with ATF will not be authorized.
- Travel expenses will not be paid for any portion of the hiring process.
- Must successfully complete Criminal Investigator Training Program (CITP) and Special Agent Basic Training (SABT).

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR GRADE 5

To qualify at the GL-5 level, you must meet **ONE** of the following:

**Education:** Applicants must have completed a 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree in any field of study.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

**OR**

**Experience:** Applicants must have 3 years of progressively responsible experience, 1 year of which was equivalent to at least the GL-4 that demonstrates the ability to work in criminal investigative or law enforcement fields that require knowledge and application of laws relating to criminal violations.

**OR**

**Combination of education and experience:** Experience and education can be combined to meet the minimum qualification requirements. Experience and education should be computed as percentages of the overall requirements and must equal 100% when combined.

**Example:** For 3 years of general experience, 18 months general experience (50% of the required experience) plus 2 years of undergraduate course work (50% of the required education) is qualifying for the GL-5 level.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING EXPERIENCE DOES NOT QUALIFY\*\***

- **Work experience as a uniformed law enforcement officer, where the principle duties consist of arrests involving traffic violations, misdemeanors and comparable offenses.**
- **Work experience in which the major duties involve guarding and protecting property; preventing crimes, and/or legal research without the application of investigative techniques.**

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR GRADE 7

To qualify at the GL-7 level, you must meet **ONE** of the following:

**Education:** Applicants must have 1 full year of graduate-level study in Criminal Justice, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science or a field of study related to this position.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

**OR**

**Superior Academic Achievement (SAA):** SAA at the baccalaureate level is fully qualifying for the GL-7 grade level. To qualify for SAA, you must have completed all requirements for a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science or a field of study related to this position, and meet **ONE** of the following:

1. A grade point average of "B" (a GPA of 2.95 or higher out of a possible 4.0) for all completed undergraduate courses, or those completed in the last 2 years of undergraduate study.
2. A grade point average of "B+" (a GPA of 3.45 or higher out of a possible 4.0) for all courses in the applicant's major field of study, or those courses in the applicant's major completed in the last 2 years of undergraduate study.
3. Rank in the upper one-third of the applicant's class in the college, university, or major subdivision of the college or university (e.g. School of Business Administration).
4. Membership in a national honor society (other than freshman honor societies) recognized by the Association of College Honor Societies.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

**OR**

**Specialized Experience:** Applicants must have at least 1 full-time year (12-months) of specialized work experience equivalent to the GL-5 level in the Federal service. Specialized experience is experience in or related to investigation of criminal violations that provided the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully perform the duties of the position. Qualifying specialized experience includes:

- Utilizing basic investigative techniques while participating in criminal investigations;
- Assisting in gathering and analyzing evidence through investigative leads, execution of search and arrest warrants and a variety of other means;
- Participating in witness and suspect interviews;
- And testifying for the Government regarding investigations in court or before grand juries;
- Preparing portions of criminal investigative case reports.

**OR**

**Combination of Education and Experience:** Experience and education can be combined to meet the minimum qualification requirements. Experience and education should be computed as percentages of the overall requirements and must equal 100% when combined. Example: 6 months of specialized experience (50% of the required experience) plus 1 semester of graduate course work (50% of the required education) is qualifying for the GL-7 level.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.) \*\***

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR GRADE 9

To qualify at the GL-9 level, you must meet ONE of the following:

**Education:** Applicants must have a master's or equivalent graduate degree or 2 full years of progressively higher level graduate education.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

OR

**Specialized Experience:** Applicants must have at least 1 full-time year (12- months) of specialized work experience equivalent to the GL-7 grade level in the Federal service. Specialized experience is experience in or related to investigations of criminal violations that provided the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully perform the duties of the position. Qualifying specialized experience includes:

- Analyzing raw investigative data and preparing comprehensive written investigative reports;
- Investigating claims involving suspected crimes or alleged fraud;
- Investigating criminal cases requiring the use of recognized investigative methods that may have included presenting evidence in court;
- Conducting interviews that involved eliciting evidence, data or surveillance information;
- Conducting criminal investigations requiring the use of surveillance, undercover or other criminal detection methods;
- Or investigating computerized business and/or accounting systems to form conclusions as to related criminal business practices and compliance with Federal laws and regulations.

OR

**Combination of Education and Experience:** Applicants must possess a combination of graduate level education and specialized experience totaling 100% of the stated minimum qualifications for the position. Only graduate education in excess of 1 year (e.g., 18 semester hours) may be combined with experience under this standard.

**\*\* (Must include a copy of your unofficial or official transcripts if qualifying based on education.)\*\***

## SALARY AND BENEFITS

- **Base Annual Salary information can be found at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov).** Starting base salary will depend upon grade qualifications (see the Basic Qualifications section of this informational packet).
- **Locality Pay:** All ATF duty stations qualify for locality pay. Special agents receive an additional percentage of their base salary, which will vary by duty location.
- **Law Enforcement Availability Pay:** Because of the type of work and additional work hours, special agents receive 25% Law Enforcement Availability Pay, which is added to the rate of basic pay.
- **Promotion Potential:** The full performance level for this position is Grade 13.

Note: Promotions are based upon performance and must receive supervisory approval.

- **Foreign Language Award Program:** The Foreign Language Award Program authorizes cash awards for ATF employees who possess and make substantial use of one or more foreign language(s) in the performance of their official duties. The cash award is based upon proficiency and substantial usage.
- **Benefits:** Annual leave (vacation time) is earned at the rate of 13-26 days per year, with a maximum accumulation of 240 hours per year.
  - Sick leave is earned at the rate of 13 days per year and may be accumulated without limit.
  - 10 paid holidays.
  - Low cost health insurance with the option to choose from a variety of plans.
  - Low cost life insurance.
  - Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) – FERS Further Revised Annuity Employees (FRAE) benefits. Special agents may retire at 50 with 20 years of law enforcement service. Special agents with 25 years of law enforcement service may retire at any age. Age 57 is the mandatory retirement age, with 20 years of law enforcement service.
  - Tax-deferred Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).
  - Health improvement (physical fitness) program.



## PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- All applicants must take and pass a pre-employment Physical Task Test (PTT). Applicants will be tested one time only in three areas, in the following order, and with 3 minutes of rest between events:
  - Sit-ups (the maximum number performed within 1 minute without stopping).
  - Push-ups (the maximum number performed within 1 minute without stopping).
  - One-and-one-half-mile run (the minimum completion time for a 1.5-mile run.)
- To pass, applicants must achieve age and gender-based minimum scores for the 1.5-mile run, sit-ups and push-ups as listed below and on the ATF web site, [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).
- The same PTT will be administered again during the first week of the Criminal Investigator Training Program (CITP) and Special Agent Basic Training (SABT) and must be passed with the same minimum scores. Prior to the completion of CITP and SABT each applicant must take and pass the PTT again and must achieve a higher score based on age and gender-based standards as posted on the ATF web site (<http://www.atf.gov/careers/pre-employment-physical-task-test>).
- The ATF National Academy strongly encourages all applicants and new special agent hires to be in top physical condition prior to arriving at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). The physical demands of the training at FLETC and the ATF National Academy require repetitive long distance running, repetitive calisthenics, lifting moderate to heavy weights, considerable physical exertion during the prescribed training regimen and other physical fitness-related activities, and considerable physical exertion while demonstrating a variety of law enforcement techniques and methods.
- The ATF field divisions will coordinate and administer the PTT. ATF Field Division Offices are listed on the ATF website at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).
- For additional information on special agent training requirements, visit the “Careers” section at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov) (click on Special Agent then the “ATF Pre-employment Physical Task Test” link).



## METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

- Applicants who are found qualified will be eligible to take the ATF Special Agent Examination (see the basic qualifications section of this informational packet).
- All applicants must take and pass the ATF Special Agent Examination and the ATF Special Agent Applicant Assessment to be eligible for further consideration for special agent positions.
- **Administration of Tests:** The test session is approximately 4 hours for both tests. The Office of Personnel Management administers and scores both tests.

**\*\* Applications for position openings or testing opportunities will only be accepted in response to a specific ATF job opportunity announcement. \*\***

**For updates on ATF Special Agent recruitment efforts, please visit the “Careers” section of our website at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).**