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## Contract Guards vs. Off Duty Law Enforcement

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***This is ONE guy's perspective that must be weighed against law, insurance, culture, etc.***

Both options come with tradeoffs that are almost always underestimated going in. This is not primarily a cost decision — it is a capability, liability, authority, and relationship decision. I have worked alongside both contract guards and off-duty officers in a variety of settings. Neither is automatically the right answer, and the wrong choice for your context can create more problems than it solves. There are other resources on our site about Volunteers vs. Guards and Firearms.

I have worked and trained law enforcement for over 30 years. My wife is former LEO and I get to mentor and support these heroes all the time. There are some Guards (and Guard Companies) that should never be used to support a church environment. There are Law Enforcement Officers that should never be used to support a church environment. So the screening and due diligence is not insignificant here just like who can be a volunteer. Have Guards or LEOs that share your beliefs, congregation norms, and denominational norms/requirements is going to be VERY difficult, but that DOES not mean their role, skills, and background can't be valuable asset.

Remember this is decision for supporting your 24x7x365 security function, not just for weekend services

Both become a supplier (vendor), but are under a CONTRACT with the BUSINESS side of the church.

	Contract Guards	Off Duty (OD) Law Enforcement
Pros	<p>Consistent scheduling — you set the hours, coverage, and post assignments.</p> <p>Organization can establish and enforce specific post orders, uniforms, and conduct standards.</p> <p>Typically lower cost than off-duty LEO. Guard company carries liability insurance and workers' compensation — not you.</p> <p>Licensing has better standards than volunteers</p> <p>Easier to replace if performance is unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>Full authority of law enforcement — can detain and arrest where a guard has limits.</p> <p>Significant deterrent effect, particularly for high-risk events.</p> <p>Typically better trained for use-of-force and emergency response scenarios.</p> <p>Personal liability often covered under their department's policy during off-duty work.</p> <p>Usually is able to bring/use their agency vehicle that can provide significant value.</p>
Cons	<p>Quality varies significantly between companies and between individual guards.</p>	<p>Higher cost (\$35–\$75+/hr depending on market and rank).</p>

	<p>High turnover is common in the contract security industry — continuity can be a challenge.</p> <p>Guards have limited legal authority — they are private citizens with a license</p> <p>Post orders must be very specific or performance will be inconsistent.</p>	<p>Scheduling depends on officer availability and department off-duty program approval.</p> <p>Officers operate under their department's policies — not yours. They may not follow your post orders the way a guard would.</p> <p>A call for service can pull an officer away mid-shift, leaving you uncovered.</p>
<p><b>Also Consider</b></p>	<p>When did you last audit your guard company's training records and insurance certificates?</p> <p>Are your post orders in writing, reviewed at least annually, and signed by the guard company?</p> <p>Do you have a single named contact at the company who is accountable for performance?</p>	<p>Does your local department have an off-duty work program with department approval required?</p> <p>Have you clarified in writing whether the officer is acting in an official law enforcement capacity or as a private contractor during your event? This distinction matters enormously for liability — clarify it before, not after, an incident.</p> <p>Have you notified your insurance carrier of your security model?</p>