

A NATIONAL SEARCH

is underway for a new Chief of Police

Port of Seattle, WA



PORT OF SEATTLE, WA

01. THE OPPORTUNITY



A national search is underway to attract a strategic, engaging, and seasoned police executive with advanced leadership skills to serve as the next Chief of Police for the Port of Seattle. This is an exceptional opportunity for a collaborative leader to guide the Port of Seattle Police Department (POSPD), a fully commissioned, nationally accredited law enforcement agency that is a critical component of the Port's broader public safety mission.

02.

THE ORGANIZATION

Established by the voters of King County in 1911, the Port of Seattle is a special purpose government that has grown into one of the nation's leading transportation and economic development agencies. Today, the Port operates Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA), manages one of the West Coast's largest and most diverse maritime portfolios, advances regional economic development, and stewards critical public infrastructure that connects Washington to national and global markets, while maximizing and advancing environmental sustainability.

The Port of Seattle is governed by a five-member Port Commission who are elected at large by the voters of King County. Commissioners serve four-year terms and are responsible for setting policy, leading intergovernmental relations, adopting budgets, overseeing long-term strategy, and providing public accountability. The Commission appoints and oversees the Executive Director, who carries out Commission policy and leads the organization's operations.

The Port employs approximately 2,500 full-time employees equivalent across a broad range of operational and administrative functions. Major divisions include Aviation, Maritime, Economic Development, and Central Services, which includes the Port of Seattle Police Department (POSPD).



03 THE PORT OF SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

As part of Washington State's largest public port district, POSPD plays a critical role in the Port's broader public safety mission and is a fully commissioned, CALEA-accredited law enforcement agency responsible for protecting one of the nation's most significant transportation systems. The Department provides comprehensive policing and public safety services across SEA, the Port's maritime facilities, cruise terminals, commercial fishing operations, public marina facilities, industrial properties, and Port managed public access areas.

With a 2025-2026 budget of \$48 million, the Port of Seattle Police Department operates in a highly complex, multi-jurisdictional environment where local, state, federal, tribal, and international partnerships are essential to mission success.

SEA serves more than 53 million passengers annually, making it one of the busiest commercial airports in North America and ensuring the safety and security of the aviation facilities from all threats is paramount. In addition to aviation security responsibilities, the Department protects critical maritime infrastructure that supports international cargo movement, the Alaska fishing fleet, cruise operations, and the region's working waterfront. These responsibilities require a sophisticated law enforcement organization capable of balancing counter terrorism, transportation security, emergency management, criminal investigations, intelligence sharing, community policing, and exceptional customer service.

The Department's mission is to provide professional law enforcement services that ensure the safety and security of passengers, employees, tenants, visitors, maritime users, and critical infrastructure while supporting the Port's broader mission of facilitating safe, efficient, and secure movement of people and commerce. The department routinely collaborates with the U.S. Coast Guard, Washington State Patrol, Seattle Police Department, King County Sheriff's Office, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection and other local, state, and federal partners.



The Port of Seattle Police Department employs approximately 196 personnel, including 138 commissioned police officers and 58 professional civilian staff who work in one of three bureaus, each led by a deputy chief as follows:

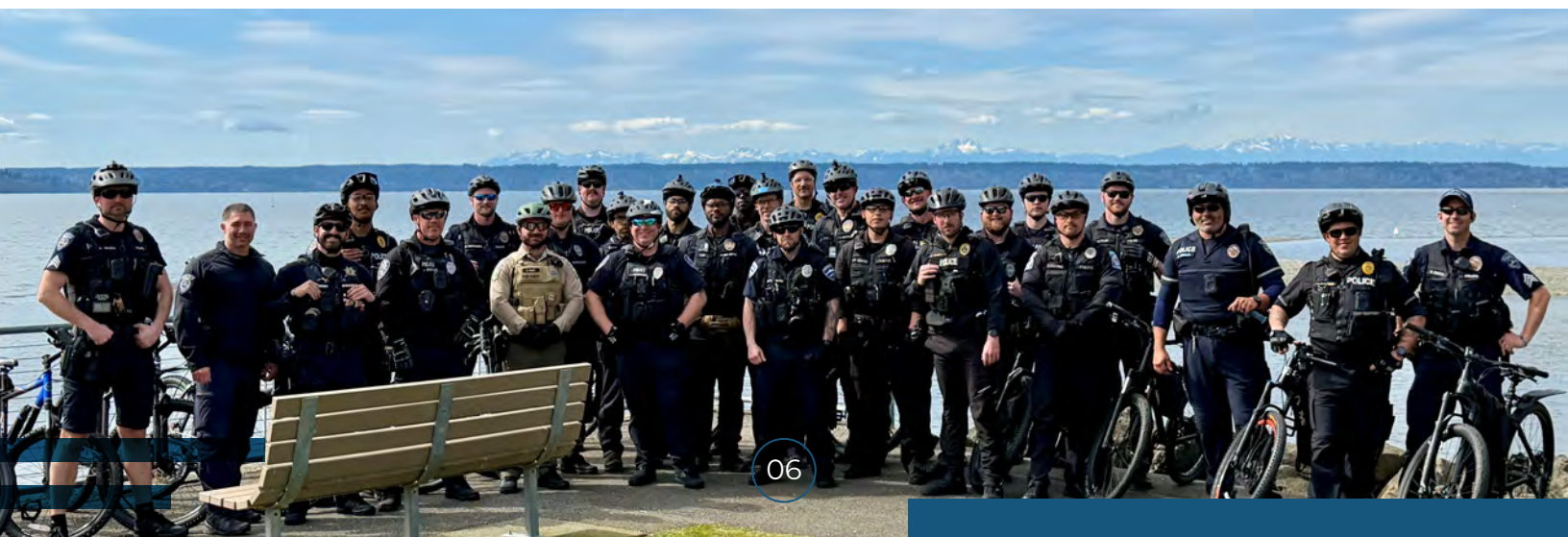
- The **Operations Bureau** serves as the most visible public-facing presence, providing uniformed patrol and first-response services. The bureau includes Airport and Seaport divisions and is supported by the Crisis Response Team, Marine Patrol Unit, Dive Team, Traffic Support Specialists, and Crowd Management Unit.
- The **Special Operations Bureau** provides the department's specialized security, investigative, and counterterrorism capabilities. The Bureau encompasses the Counter Terrorism Division—including the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU) and Explosives Detection K-9 Unit—the SWAT Team, participation in the Joint Terrorism Task Force, intelligence and threat assessment functions, criminal investigations, and drug interdiction operations.
- The **Services Bureau** provides non-uniformed, administrative, technical, and operational support functions, including the 24/7 Police and Fire Communications Center, administrative services, training and professional development, policies and standards, records management, fleet and supply, finance and budget, employee wellness, peer support, professional standards, and accountability functions.





THE POSITION 04.

Under the direction of the Port of Seattle's Deputy Executive Director, the Chief of Police is responsible for ensuring appropriate law enforcement services are provided at SEA, the Seaport, and other Port of Seattle properties. This "at-will" role works with Port Executives and Business Unit leaders to develop, fund, and execute strategies and service levels to facilitate continuity of operations and enhance public safety. The Chief collaborates with internal and external stakeholders and state and federal partners to ensure the highest level of security on Port facilities. This role is responsible for all functions and activities of the Police Department.





Essential Responsibilities

The following are high-level descriptions of the main responsibilities of this job. These are the most important elements of the position and overall responsibilities, not an exhaustive list.

- Lead a police agency that provides world class law enforcement services and that protects and ensures safe passage through the Port of Seattle jurisdiction.
- Performs all duties as the chief law enforcement officer of the Port of Seattle to ensure appropriate enforcement of laws and public peace and order.
- Maintains a shared vision for the Police Department and inspires others to work towards it. Communicates strategic vision and demonstrates commitment to it. Inspires others and the department to the highest levels of achievement.
- Establishes strategic plans, goals, objectives, and department policies. Directs all Police Department activities including personnel management, budget, resource allocation, and operational decisions to ensure goal attainment.
- Works effectively with Executive and Elected Commissioners on achieving Port's goals and objectives.
- Demonstrates effective communication skills by establishing and maintaining effective channels of communication and partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, state and federal law enforcement, and regulatory entities to ensure security, public safety, and continuity of operations on Port properties.
- Represents both in public and private life, the Port of Seattle and its Police Department with community members, business partners, internal customers, and other stakeholders in a manner that instills trust and legitimacy.
- May act as and perform job duties of direct and indirect reports on an as needed basis.
- Applies equity and exemplifies shared values, behaviors, and practices in all aspects of the work. At the Port of Seattle, equity is a daily responsibility and a foundational expectation for all Port employees.

05 THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Executive Leadership and Strategic Vision

The successful candidate will bring progressive command experience and a demonstrated record of setting strategic direction, leading organizational change, managing complex crises, and strengthening institutional performance. As the leader of a sophisticated, 24-hour public safety organization, the Chief will align departmental priorities with the Port's broader mission across aviation, maritime operations, critical infrastructure, commerce, regional security, and the Port's RAISE values. The Chief will have knowledge of police organizational leadership principles and techniques, including creating shared visions, developing strategies, increasing human performance, and recruiting and maintaining a well-trained and diverse workforce.

Law Enforcement Expertise

The Chief will have a deep understanding of Washington State law enforcement related statutes, federal case law, and federal regulations for Airport Law Enforcement Officers. They will be aware of current issues within law enforcement both locally and nationally. They will have demonstrated experience of police operations, including resource allocation, crime prevention, and active threat prevention and mitigation. The Chief will have demonstrated an understanding of community policing principles and experience leading other police leaders.

Governance and Enterprise Partnership

The Chief will serve as a trusted advisor to the Port's executive leadership team and work effectively with the Port Commission, Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, aviation and maritime leaders, labor partners, Port department leaders, federal agencies, and regional public safety organizations. Politically astute while remaining nonpartisan, the Chief will navigate complex governance and decision-making structures, build durable partnerships, translate public safety priorities into credible enterprise strategies and maintain public trust. This executive must balance aviation and maritime interests and approach major decisions from a Port-wide perspective. At the same time, the Chief will demonstrate a strong understanding of operations that achieve objectives in a law enforcement organization including the ability to forecast medium to long term needs. They will be able to develop goals and strategies that enable the Port to meet its objectives, implement these goals and strategies, and track the progress.



Executive Communication and Organizational Culture

The next Chief will communicate with clarity, candor, and consistency, ensuring that employees and stakeholders understand the department's direction and the rationale behind significant decisions. Through a visible and engaged leadership presence, the Chief will listen to and value the expertise of commissioned and non-commissioned employees and foster a unified culture grounded in trust, inclusion, professionalism, service, and shared purpose. The successful candidate will create an environment in which employees are respected, informed, and encouraged to contribute to the organization's continued success. The Chief will have effective verbal, written, and active listening communication skills with a variety of audiences such as commissioners, community members, executives, and staff. Through authentic communication and interpersonal skills, they will be able to garner trust and build strong, credible relationships internally and externally.

Leadership and Accountability

The ideal candidate will be an accomplished builder of teams, leaders, and organizational capacity. The Chief will establish clear expectations, lead and empower the police department, delegate authority appropriately, and maintain accountability for results without micromanaging. This leader will strengthen succession planning and professional development while pairing high-performance standards with coaching, mentoring, and support. They must be able to inspire and motivate others, build consensus, and make sound decisions under pressure, including during large, complex, and rapidly evolving critical incidents. The Chief will have advanced leadership skills, with the ability to lead teams and influence others at all levels of the organization. They will demonstrate a strong understanding of organizational structure, culture, and political dynamics to effectively navigate decision making channels.

Labor and Workforce Leadership

The successful candidate will bring meaningful experience leading in a unionized public-sector environment and a strong understanding of constructive labor-management relations. The Chief will engage labor representatives professionally, administer collective bargaining agreements consistently, and preserve management's responsibility to establish standards and advance the department's mission. This executive will also take a strategic approach to workforce planning, employee well-being, leadership continuity, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Innovation and Enterprise Modernization

The Chief will recognize that technology, data, infrastructure, and contemporary public safety practices are essential components of safety, resilience, accountability, and service excellence. The successful candidate will be able to establish priorities, articulate the enterprise value of modernization, steward resources responsibly, and build cross-functional support for significant initiatives. This leader will approach modernization strategically, connecting departmental investments and capabilities to the Port's long-term growth and institutional objectives.

Personal Leadership Qualities

Above all, the Port seeks a Chief who leads with integrity, humility, courage, and disciplined judgment. The successful candidate will be decisive yet thoughtful, confident enough to listen before acting, culturally responsive, emotionally intelligent, fair, resilient, and lead by example. The Chief's actions will align with the Port's RAISE values and the Department's values and will build upon the Department's accomplishments, inspire confidence among employees and stakeholders, and position the Department for continued success.



06. QUALIFICATIONS

Experience

Eight (8) years of experience as a law enforcement senior leader, deputy chief, commander, or performing similar functions in a police department/agency, including responsibility for police department operational activities, such as strategic planning, policies, programs, budgeting, forecasting, and/or compliance or risk mitigation.

Six (6) years of experience supervising police department and/or agency staff which must include supervision of other supervisors.

License/Certification/Education

- Required Washington State Certified Peace Officer or ability to acquire certification within 6 months of employment
- National Incident Management System 300 and 400 required within 6 months of employment.
- Required valid Washington State Driver's License.
- Must meet RCW 35.21.333 eligibility requirements.

Washington State Residency Requirement

Employees must establish a residence in Washington State within 30 days of their first day of employment and must maintain a residence in Washington State during their employment with the Port of Seattle. If a position is eligible to telework, work performed while teleworking must be performed in Washington State.

Background and Security Requirements

The successful candidate must pass a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) background check as well as a criminal history background check with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Employment will be contingent upon obtaining a Port of Seattle ID badge upon clearance. A U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Customs Seal must be obtained within 30 days of hire.

A comprehensive background investigation, including a polygraph, is required per RCW 35.21.333.





07. COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The annual salary range for the Chief of Police is **\$246,997 to \$306,061**. Salary offers will be made within the posted range. Placement within the range will be determined based on similar work experience. The Port considers work experience to be similar if the scope and level of responsibility of your prior positions match the job being offered.

Retirement

The Port of Seattle participates in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) which is a 401(a) lifetime retirement pension plan available to law enforcement officers and firefighters in Washington State.

08. APPLY TODAY



APPLY TODAY!

Candidates are encouraged to apply immediately by emailing a comprehensive resume, compelling cover letter, and list of professional references to **apply@publicsectorsearch.com**.

References will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Candidates should apply by **August 28, 2026**. This position will be considered open until a final selection is made.

After a selection has been made, an offer will follow, contingent on the successful completion of the remainder of the Port's hiring process. It is anticipated that the selected candidate will begin their new role as Chief of Police in November 2026, or a mutually agreeable date.

APPLY WITH CONFIDENCE

Candidates should direct inquiries and questions regarding this position or the recruitment process to:

**Mr. Gary Peterson, President/CEO
Chief of Police (Ret.)**

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