



# **Frequently Asked Questions for Participating Members and Organizations**

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## ABOUT SWAC

### What is SWAC?

SWAC is an acronym for Secure Worker Access Consortium. SWAC is a highly-secure, information-sharing program that provides services and technologies to verify that individuals who access sensitive facilities are known and have demonstrated a safe and threat-free history. NJT and MTA have joined the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to now specify SWAC as the regional standard for processing of Personal Identity Verification and Criminal Background Investigations. These agencies and others are strategically partnering with regional labor groups and contractors to mitigate risk, develop a SWAC Trusted Community, and cooperatively improve regional and national security.

### What public needs are fulfilled by SWAC?

SWAC provides turnkey services and technologies in a practical, cost-effective package. It delivers a shared solution based on the directives and guidelines put forth by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), - Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) list of Disqualifying Criminal Offenses as detailed in 49 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 1542.209 and 1572.103.

Enrollment in SWAC enables public agencies and private corporations to cooperatively assure that individuals requiring access to secure areas of their regulated facilities, infrastructures, and ports have been pre-screened and meet personal identity verification and criminal background investigation requirements.

### Why is SWAC unique?

SWAC is the only program that enables facility owners and labor partners to strengthen regional security by providing real-time, positive identity and credential verification of their work forces. Advanced, patent-pending technology used by SWAC enables secure information sharing on a need-to-know basis among disconnected companies and industries. This technology empowers SWAC members to establish personnel assurance standards against which individuals can be measured and verified.

Most importantly, information sharing eliminates redundant identity and background checks. This results in costs savings, industry-wide.

SWAC provides:

- Personnel data collection and program administration
- Acceptance of valid TWIC cardholders without time and cost of additional background screening
- Identity document verification, photo capture and authorization-form management
- Supervision of independent, third-party personal identity verification and criminal history background screening vendors
- Production and delivery of membership ID cards
- Secure, web-based information management system
- Daily search of OFAC-SDN watch list

### **What are the levels of security screened for by SWAC?**

SWAC screening criteria is based upon the directives and guidelines put forth by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) list of Disqualifying Criminal Offenses as detailed in 49 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 1542.209 and 1572.103.

This federal standard creates a three-tiered security profile that assures a sufficient number of qualified contract workers:

- High – for work in high-risk areas and/or access to sensitive information
- Medium – for work in medium-risk areas
- Standard – for work in all other areas

A complete list of investigations performed as well as disqualifying criminal offenses can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp>. In the Form Downloads section of the web page, click on the PDF file titled *Background Screening Criteria*.

### **What kind of information is included in the background check?**

Protecting workers' privacy is a SWAC priority. Federal standards and guidelines for evaluating criminal background are strictly adhered to by independent, third-party background screening companies that provide these services to SWAC. The SWAC program does not review or collect consumer credit ratings or reports. Membership is based solely on personal identity verification and criminal history.

## ENROLLMENT PROCESS

### Does my company need to sign up?

SWAC enables each applicant to sponsor their own *Individual Membership Application*, however it is most common for members to affiliate with corporate sponsors. To enroll your company, simply fill out a *Corporate Membership Application* online at <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp>. Upon completion of this short and free application, you will receive a Sponsor Account Number via email. Your company's Sponsor Account Number is very important as it is used to associate Individual Membership Applications with your company.

### How long should the entire individual enrollment process take?

There are four steps in the individual enrollment process. The entire process is often completed in as little as 1 or 2 days, and should take no more than 4 to 5 days.

**1. Online application** – Completing an application is simple and can be easily completed online in less than 10 minutes. To start, go to: <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp> and select the link that says, “**Click Here to Enroll in SWAC**”.

**2. Positive Identification** – Each applicant must present SWAC Agents with original, government-issued documents to prove their identity. During this visit to a Processing Center, a digital photo is captured for use on your SWAC Membership ID card, and background screening authorization forms are confirmed with a digital signature. It is highly recommended that applicants complete this step immediately after submitting their application. Failure to visit a Processing Center to present your identity documents will delay the SWAC membership process and delivery of your ID card.

**3. Background Screening** – As soon as SWAC receives your completed application, submission to an independent, third-party background screening company is initiated. Results for identification verification and criminal background checks can be expected within 1-3 days. In fact, more than one third receive clearance within 24 hours and more than two thirds within 48 hours. Certain U.S. States (e.g. Pennsylvania and several New England States) and foreign address histories may require additional screening time. **Please note: TWIC cardholders are eligible for immediate approval without additional screening time or cost.**

**4. ID Card Issuance** – Upon successful completion of Steps 1 through 3, ID cards are automatically processed for issuance, and are delivered to the appropriate SWAC Processing Center for pickup by authorized representatives.

### What documents are accepted for Positive Identification (Step 3 above)?

Identity documents presented for Positive Identification must be original government-issued documents that are in acceptable condition so as not to hinder inspection and authentication.

A complete list of acceptable identity documents is included within the *Individual Membership Application, Step 12*. To access and download a sample application, go to: <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp>. In the **Additional Resources for Download** section, click on the PDF file titled *Sample Documents and Application Forms*.

### **How do I know that my personal information is safe?**

To ensure the protection of personal and credential information from unauthorized access or use, technology systems used by SWAC feature redundant and varied security protocols. This layered approach to data encryption and security-protects data and internet communications at all times. All personal information is maintained in a central, protected SAS-70 Level II certified data center.

### **What if I do not have the required forms of identification, or do not wish to consent to background screening?**

All SWAC applicants are required to present the identification forms, as outlined above, for authentication by a SWAC Agent. If you do not have the required identification information, or if you do not sign the authorization forms, we will be unable to complete your enrollment.

An exemption to the identity document requirement is provided for individuals who require access to Confidential Information only (e.g. bid documents). Under this exemption, the applicant's membership rights will be severely limited, a SWAC Membership ID Card will not be issued, and the applicant will not be granted access to sensitive facilities that require program participation.

### **Where do I go to present my identity documents?**

SWAC operates fixed Processing Centers at major transportation centers and support offices throughout metropolitan New York and New Jersey to assure workers have fast, convenient access to enrollment services. In addition, fully operational mobile units are often dispatched to accommodate on-site processing of large groups (additional charges apply). Current information about our expanding network of SWAC Processing Centers, including locations and operating hours, is available on our website, at: <http://www.secureworker.com/info-center.asp>.

### **Are appointments required at S.W.A.C. Processing Centers?**

No appointments are necessary. Simply walk into the most convenient location. Since Processing Centers are open on specific days of the week, we do encourage you to check the hours at your local Processing Center so you can plan accordingly. Processing Center locations and operating hours are maintained on our website, at <http://www.secureworker.com/info-center.asp>.

### **Is help available to complete the application?**

Yes, SWAC Agents are available to assist applicants at 1-877-522-7922 and at any SWAC Processing Center.

### **What if someone doesn't meet the qualification standards?**

All applicants have the opportunity to appeal an initial determination that the required screening standards were not met. To protect workers' privacy, this appeal process is conducted in confidence with the appropriate independent, third-party screening company.

### **What can disqualify membership in SWAC?**

An individual will be ineligible for SWAC membership if he/she:

- Lacks lawful presence and certain immigration status in the US
- Fails to provide proper legal paperwork for residence in this country
- Has a connection to terrorist activities as indicated by federal terrorist watch lists.
- Fails to meet the minimum program standards for personal identity verification and criminal background as established by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) list of Disqualifying Criminal Offenses and detailed in 49 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 1542.209 and 1572.103

### **What are disqualifying crimes?**

SWAC screening criteria is based upon directives and guidelines put forth by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) list of Disqualifying Criminal Offenses as detailed in 49 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 1542.209 and 1572.103.

For additional information on crimes that would disqualify an applicant for membership in SWAC, please visit our website at: <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp> and click on the download titled *Background Screening Criteria*.

## SWAC MEMBERSHIP

### How much does membership in SWAC cost?

The annual membership fee for SWAC is \$124.37. A \$10 handling charge applies to all applications. Applicants who have a valid TWIC card are eligible to bypass the background screening requirements with no additional cost after biometric authentication of their card.

For applications which require background screening, there is an additional cost of \$200. This fixed rate for personal identity verification and criminal background investigation covers screening services provided by an independent, third-party background screening company. Additional fees will apply to U.S. citizens living abroad and foreign nationals depending on the countries of residence for each unique applicant.

### Will a non-US citizen be able to get a SWAC membership?

Yes. There are a number of immigration categories that are eligible to apply including: nationals, refugees, lawful non-immigrants with unrestricted work authorization, and certain professionals with restricted work authorization. Membership eligibility is based on the applicant's ability to produce authentic forms of acceptable identity documents, as show at: <http://www.secureworker.com/apply-online.asp>. In the **Additional Resources for Download** section, click on the PDF file titled *Sample Documents and Application Forms*, and refer to pages 25-27.

### What if a SWAC Membership Card needs to be replaced?

If a SWAC card is misplaced, damaged or stolen, the Designated Administrative Contact (DAC) or Designated Security Representative (DSR) from your organization must be informed so that the card can be inactivated and a new card issued. The replacement fee is \$60.

### How long is my SWAC membership valid?

To maintain high security levels, your SWAC membership must be renewed annually. The expiration date is displayed on the front of your membership card. To help ensure that your membership does not expire unintentionally, if you provided an email address with your application, you will receive 90- day, 60- day and 30- day notifications prior to your membership expiration.