Washington State Patrol

Firearms Background Check Program - Annual Report

July 2025

Executive Summary

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5985 passed the 2024 legislative session, requiring the Washington State Patrol to report on the average time between receiving a background check request and final decision. This report is due annually, starting no later than July 1, 2025.

Background

The Washington State Patrol Firearms Background Division serves as the central point of contact for firearm dealers to conduct background checks related to firearm sales and transfers.

It uses the Secure Automated Firearms E-Check (SAFE) system for firearm background checks. This system, which became mandatory for all firearm dealers on January 1, 2024, determines whether a purchaser is legally eligible to own a firearm. The SAFE system interfaces with various databases, including those from the FBI, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and other state agencies.

Average Time

Average processing time is calculated by aggregating the durations of all background check cases, including those resolved through automated rule-based systems and those that undergo manual staff adjudication. The result is a composite measure of overall system performance.

Monthly Submissions – 2024

Month	Submissions	Approved	Denied	Average Time (hours)
January	17,789	17,615	174	2.7
February	19,704	19,533	171	1.9
March	22,510	22,274	236	2.2
April	19,121	18,923	198	1.9
May	18,875	18,662	213	2.0
June	17,755	17,596	159	2.3
July	17,146	16,999	147	2.1
August	19,226	19,044	182	2.2
September	18,668	18,453	215	2.9
October	21,117	20,874	243	2.0
November	23,291	23,081	210	188.1[*]
December	24,703	24,464	239	2.3
TOTAL	239,905	237,518	2,387	

In November 2024, a two-week outage at the Administrative Office of the Courts significantly increased our average processing time.

Yearly Average Time[**]

The average time required for a human examiner to fully adjudicate a background check was **80.85 hours** or approximately **3.3 days**.

In contrast, background checks processed through rule-based automation averaged **2.6 hours**, with automatic denials occurring in **under 3 minutes**.

*** The November 2024 average was excluded from the annual calculation to provide a more accurate reflection of typical processing times.*