

# How to Choose a Private Investigation Company for Physical Surveillance; A Pragmatic Checklist

1. Verify private investigation company has an active private investigator license in California: <https://search.dca.ca.gov>
2. Verify private investigation company is active and in good standing with the California Secretary of State: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/business-programs>
3. Will the private investigation company use employees or licensed PI sub-contractors to conduct the physical surveillance?

The worker classification of the field surveillance-investigator will determine how much more vetting will be needed to ensure legal compliance, amount of exposure to liabilities and if there is valid insurance coverage. Please contact us if need additional information.

4. Verify the private investigation company has the required general liability (E&O) insurance policy of a minimum \$ 1,000,000 coverage. If you use the investigation company, you should asked to be added as an additional insured on the private investigation company's general liability (E&O) insurance policy.
5. Does the private investigation company specialize in surveillance-investigations?

Private sector physical surveillance is the most difficult investigation discipline to perform successfully on a consistent basis. Just as one would not use a primary physician for heart surgery, one should not use a generalist private investigation company for a highly specialized discipline, such as private sector physical surveillance.

6. Do the surveillance-investigators working your case perform physical surveillance as a full-time job?

Private sector physical surveillance is the most difficult investigation discipline to successfully perform on a consistent basis, and should only be performed by full-time practitioners. It is an art form that requires extensive experience, regular practice and expensive equipment.

7. Does the investigation company use the necessary tools to assist the surveillance-investigators?

Investigation companies specializing in physical surveillance and their surveillance-investigator practitioners should use tools specific to their craft. For example, a qualified private investigation company will have surveillance-investigators who use long range HD video cameras; FCC licensed two-way radios; rapid deployable compact video cameras that are connected via data (not wi-fi) and drone capability operated by drone experts. Tools, like other professions, frequently is the difference between success or failure of a physical surveillance assignment.

8. Ask for a sample surveillance-investigation report and sample invoice?

The invoice will provide you with those potentially unexpected costs, much like the “resort fees” at some hotels. Typical charges are hourly rates and gas mileage fees traveling to and from the physical surveillance location. These are typical pass-through costs that all go directly to the surveillance-investigators. Auto maintenance, fuel cost and auto insurance are at a premium expense these days for surveillance-investigators, especially in California.

9. Does the person supervising the field surveillance-investigators have private sector physical surveillance experience as a field surveillance-investigator and managing a surveillance team on same type cases, and familiarity with privacy laws and procedures for secure communications with a client?

Just like a sports team or military unit, a qualified experienced supervisor-manager is necessary to ensure optimal results and to avoid negative situations.

10. Most important: At a minimum, have the prospective private investigation company provide you with three credible references who have used the prospective company for the same type of physical surveillance assignment you need.

Any investigative company specializing in physical surveillance should be able to provide numerous credible references, an interview with the supervisor-manager of the surveillance-investigators and willingly demonstrate what equipment and resources are used on physical surveillances.

Unfortunately, a large number of private investigation companies falsely claim to be "experts" at private sector physical surveillance. If you have any questions regarding above guidelines or believe you have been misled by a private investigation company regarding a physical surveillance assignment, please contact Michael R. Wolivar @ (888) 965-4827 for a free consultation.