



State of Details

 **COVID-19 Edition**

The data, trends, & innovations
that shape successful overtime
& secondary employment in law
enforcement — 2020



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Introduction

As we look back on the first half of 2020, the impact of COVID-19 has been significant. From the effects it has had on the economy, to the personal toll it has taken on communities across the country, the pandemic continues to challenge our definition of normalcy. The idea of “going back to normal” has become a bigger question: *“How do we adapt?”*. The law enforcement industry is no exception.

As first responders stand on the front lines of COVID-19, working to enforce curfews and mandated policies, they face a growing list of challenges that continue to threaten their health and safety. Certain standards and procedures no longer reflect the realities of the current situation, suggesting that change is needed to protect law enforcement officers and other first responders against occupational hazards.

Officers will be the first to say how vital secondary employment is to their daily lives and their ability to provide for their families. Being eligible to work extra-duty shifts is a profitable opportunity, and most officers choosing to work overtime and off-duty details are in the beginning stages of their careers. They have the energy, time, and drive to work more and earn more.

PowerDetails data shows that the average law enforcement officer works more than 170 hours of off-duty and special events each year. These details are critical for many officers, as they can account for up to 20% of their annual income¹.

According to a 2017 study by the University of South Carolina School of Law, more than 80% of law enforcement agencies allow their officers to work off-duty shifts in some capacity². Within those agencies, 43% of officers chose to apply. Regardless of agency size, the amount of off-duty revenue being processed each year is significant. In the same year (2017), PowerDetails found that an average of \$660,000 in off-duty detail revenue was processed³.

However, while some agencies understand the amount of revenue being generated and have efficient means of tracking these details, others find it challenging to maintain oversight. This rang true for former Seattle Police Chief Kathleen O’Toole when overtime expenses almost doubled in 2016. She asked the city auditor to take a deeper look at the numbers to determine the cause.

According to the 60+ page Overtime Controls Audit⁴, there was found to be:

- *Inadequate oversight of overtime or off-duty details*
- *No approval process for overtime or off-duty details*
- *Limited ability to enforce overtime policy and prevent system abuse*
- *Officer fatigue from a combination of working on-duty and off-duty shifts*
- *No means of accurate reporting*
- *No realistic budgeting*

¹ PowerDetails Data Analysis, 2017, based on an average pay rate of \$40 a hour and an average income of \$35,000 a year

² **Moonlighting:** The Private Employment of Off-Duty Officers; by Seth W. Stoughton, University of South Carolina School of Law (2017)

³ PowerDetails Data Analysis, 2017

⁴ **Overtime Controls Audit:** 2016, Seattle Police Department



If an agency has limited knowledge of an officer's off-duty activity, how can it mitigate risk and ensure officers follow the proper procedures mandated to keep safety and order?

Coordinators and administrators manage this risk every day. Despite proper training and agreeing to the agency's secondary employment policies, officer activity can be difficult to monitor. As we learned from the University of South Carolina School of Law, almost half of eligible officers choose to supplement their income through working off-duty details, making equitable job distribution a common concern.

For command staff, risk management is equally concerning. It's an uncomfortable feeling when agency leaders lack the necessary tools to maintain oversight and accountability as they recognize how one officer's actions can affect the agency's reputation. Executives value peace of mind knowing that their officers and communities are protected & accounted for at all times.

According to a 2016 Seattle Times report⁵, the Seattle Police Department has been proactive in updating their policy and the manual section on overtime (4.020)⁶ in an effort to be more accountable. As of September, 12th, 2018, the department was working on implementing digital time tracking that automatically audits overtime⁷.

The Seattle Police Department understands that with technology-driven oversight in place, agencies are better equipped to identify risk and enforce policy.

Software solutions that reduce the coordinator's workload and allow officers to easily apply to jobs from anywhere are invaluable to agencies that are looking to improve their off-duty and overtime processes.

As a partner to our customers in law enforcement since 2006, PowerDetails is contributing to the conversation by offering a data analysis of all off-duty and overtime activity in 2020. This analysis highlights how COVID-19 has affected the industry compared to previous years, and provides best practices for how agencies can adapt to the challenges this pandemic has created. We hope you will find this data useful as you compare your agency's data and experiences to the nation-wide trends that we have identified in this report. Our goal is to equip your agency with the information it needs to improve off-duty and overtime policy as the circumstances around the pandemic continue to change.

PowerDetails is a software platform dedicated to serving the law enforcement industry for more than 14 years. Our mission is to help public safety agencies maintain accountability in secondary employment and overtime distribution by developing solutions that are efficient, accurate, and fair.

The PowerDetails platform is designed to support the entire agency and its customers:

- *Command Staff can generate detailed reports to oversee all off-duty activity*
- *Coordinators can communicate efficiently with both customers and personnel*
- *Officers enjoy fair access to jobs and receive payments faster through electronic billing*
- *Customers can process payments directly in the app for swift and easy billing*

⁵ [The Seattle Times](#): 2016, Seattle Police Department's overtime blues — \$24.2M last year — now a 64-page audit

⁶ [City of Seattle - Seattle.gov](#): Seattle Police Department Manual, 4.020 - Reporting and Recording Overtime/Out of Classification Pay

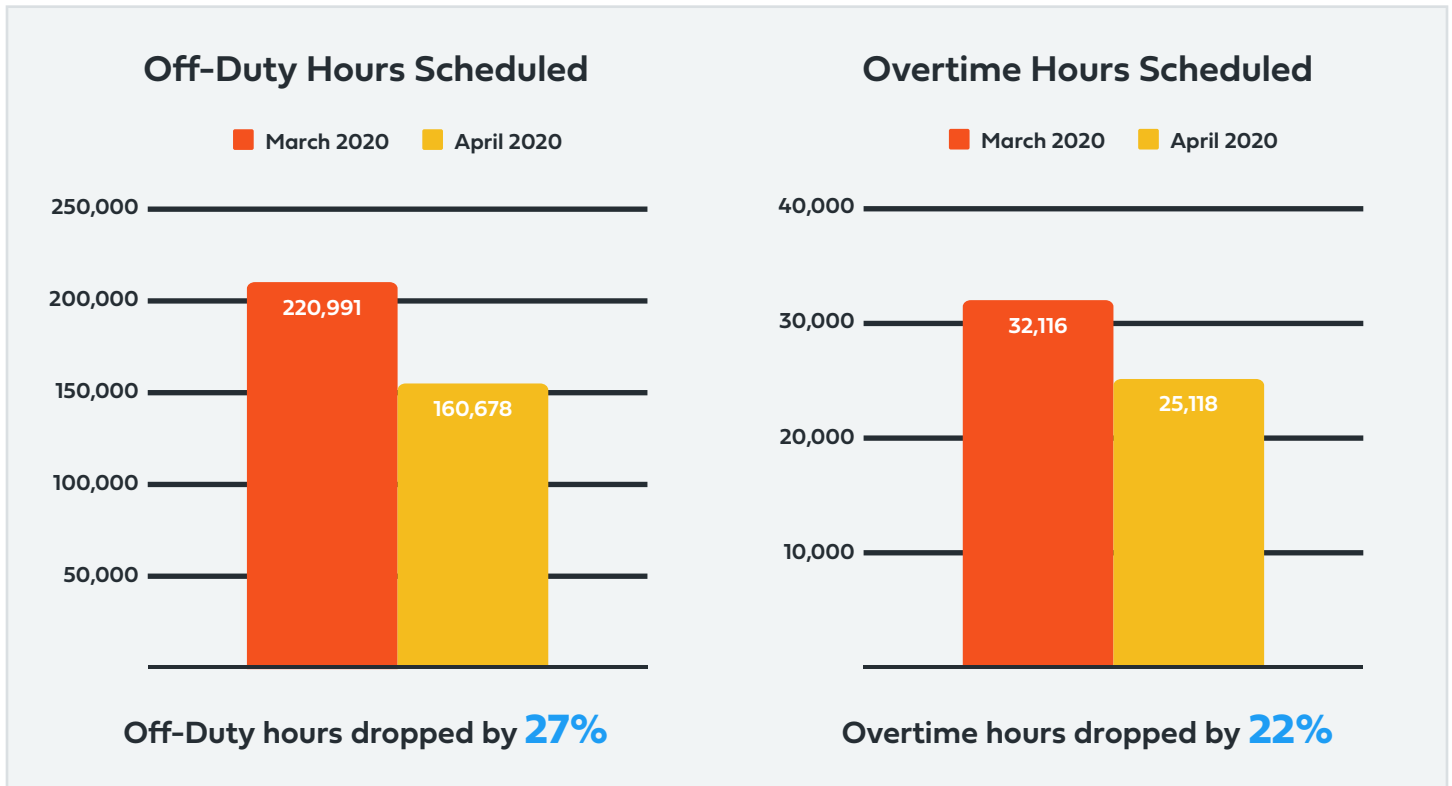
⁷ [City of Seattle - Seattle.gov](#): 2017, Status of Audit Recommendations



Effects of COVID-19

Through data analysis, PowerDetails has identified some notable changes in the behavior of officers, agencies, and their customers since the emergence of COVID-19. While the number of off-duty hours in the platform started to decline significantly between March and April 2020, the reduction in overtime hours was less significant.

Sample based on 54,000 officers & other first-responders across the U.S.A.



While many bars and restaurants stay closed and crowded sporting events remain on pause, this trend is far from surprising. Officers are finding themselves more focused on overtime patrol work, enforcing curfews, and protective mandates rather than the typical off-duty opportunities that they are accustomed to working.

To make matters more difficult, agencies are also struggling to overcome staffing problems as officers who test positive for COVID-19 are forced to self quarantine.

At the end of March 2020, The Associated Press reported that a fifth of the Detroit Police Department was forced to quarantine, including the chief of police⁸.

As agencies continue to adapt to the changing needs of their communities, PowerDetails has seen a continuation of this trend in recent months.

Sheriff Daron Hall, President of the National Sheriff's Association, stated in a February 2nd Times article⁹,

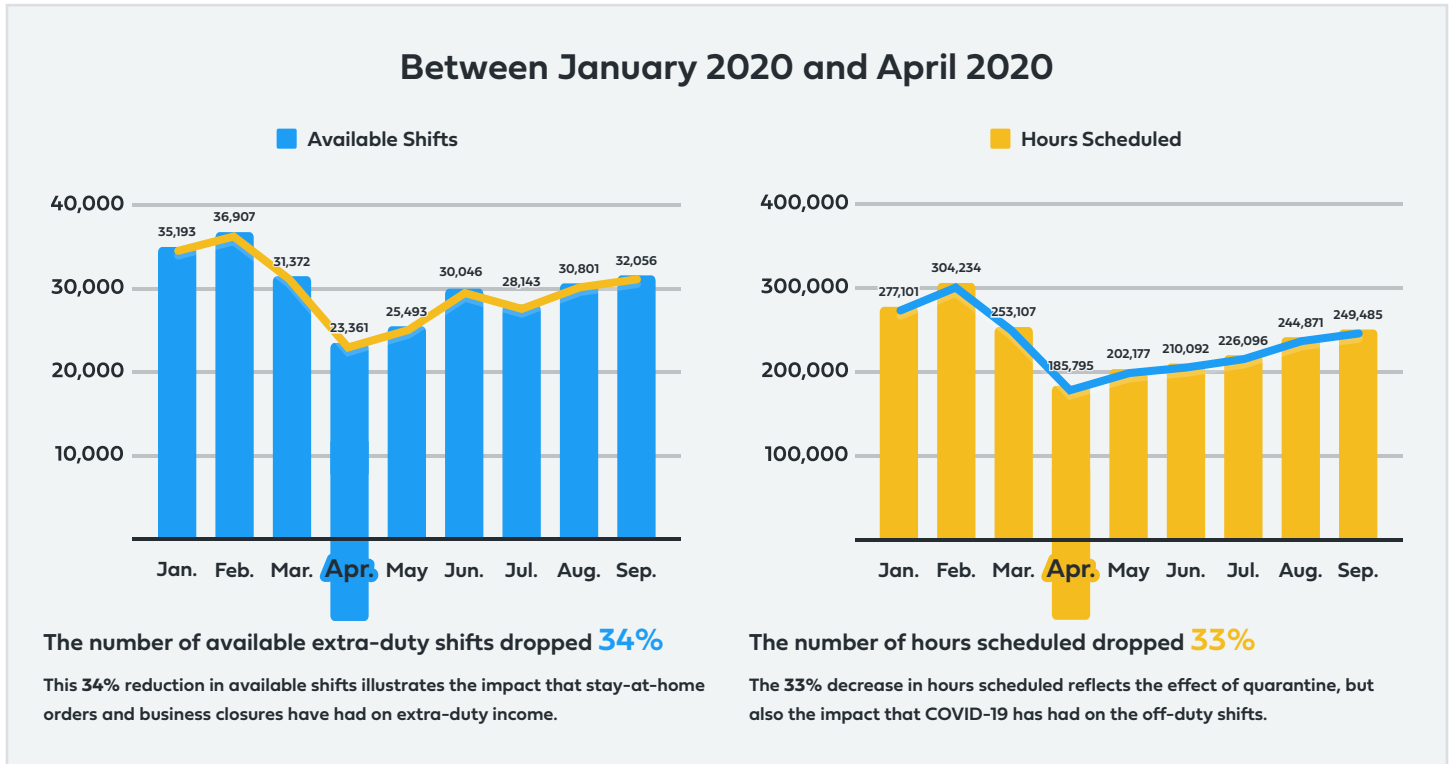
⁸ The Associated Press: Officers are scared out there: Coronavirus hits US police



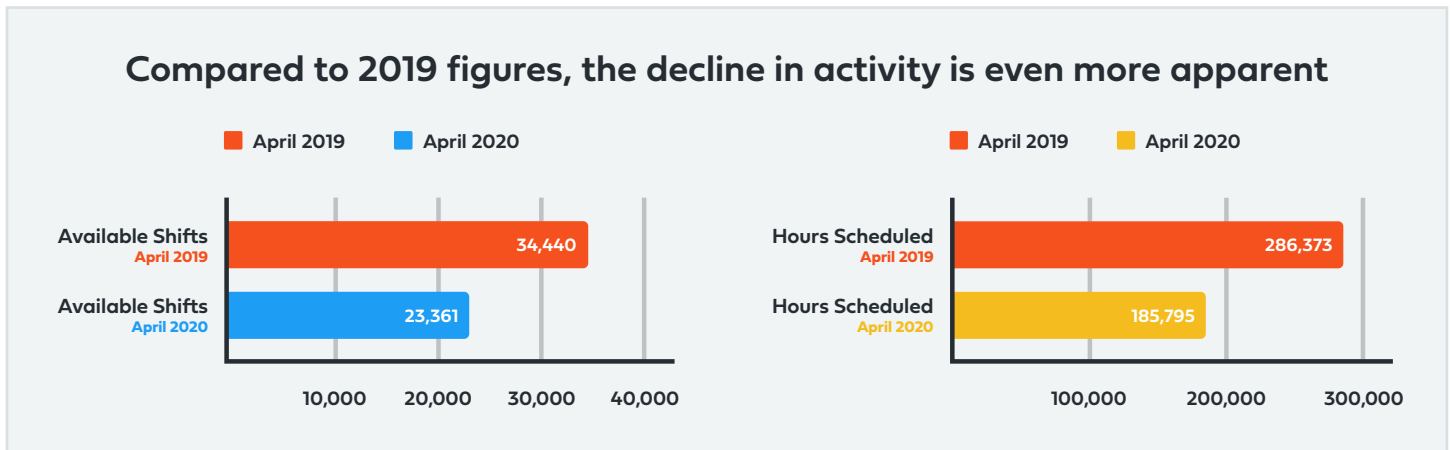
"Amid the pandemic, law enforcement officers are trying to strike a balancing act between protecting civilians and protecting themselves." It is critical that law enforcement agencies maintain a firm sense of security for their officers and communities as they work to maintain oversight over their officers on the front lines.

A data analysis of secondary employment activity shows significant evidence that the pandemic has affected the day-to-day operations of most agencies across North America. The overall decline in secondary employment began the second week in March when concern over COVID-19 was just beginning to escalate.

Sample based on 54,000 officers & other first-responders across the U.S.A.



As hours of operation for businesses became limited, so did the need for private security.



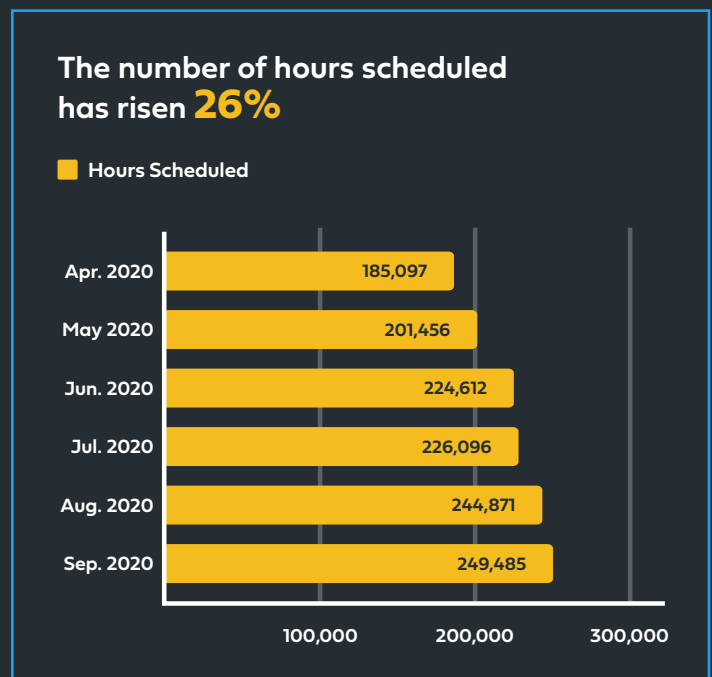
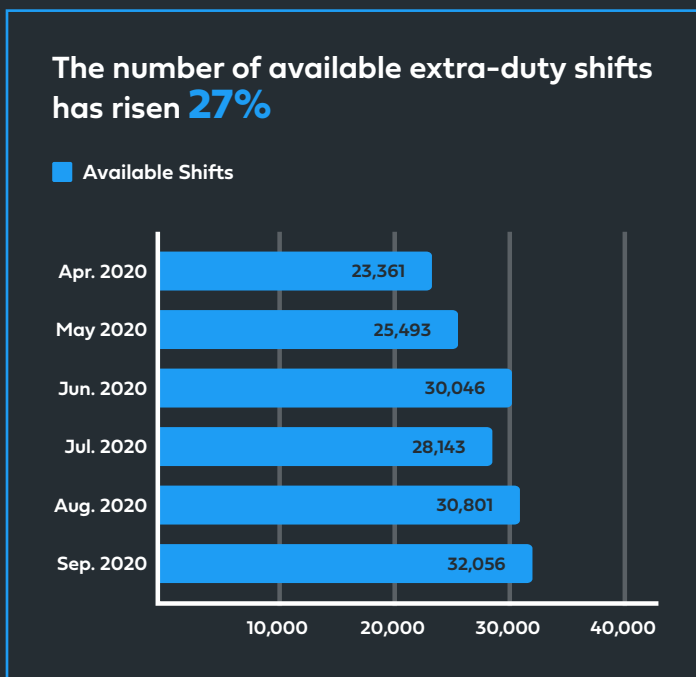
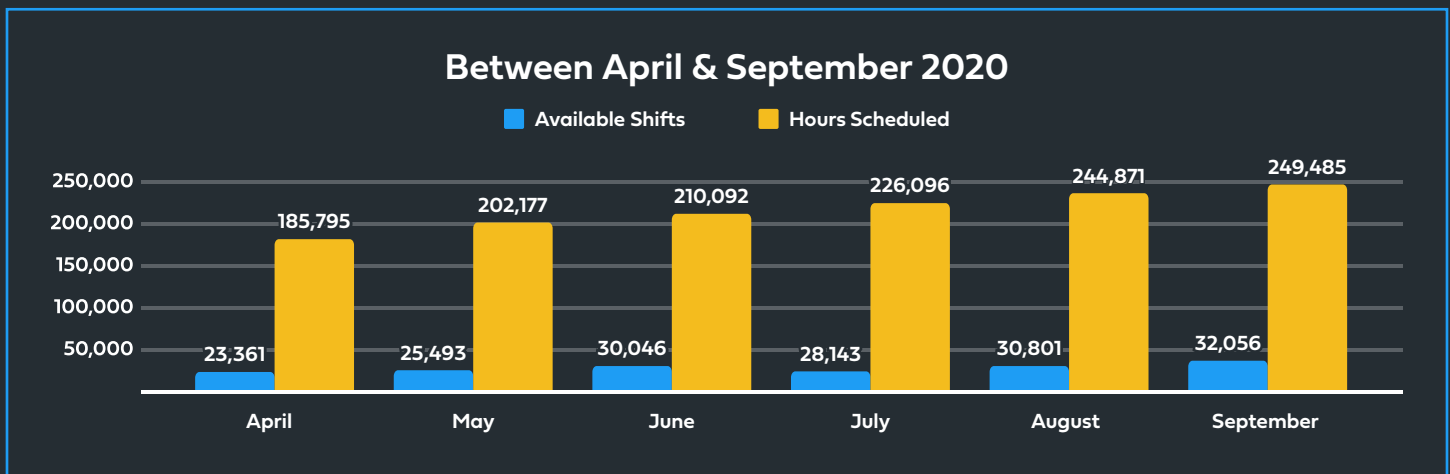
⁹ TIME: Police Departments, Sheriffs' Offices Across the U.S. Grapple With COVID-19's Impact on Public Safety—and Their Own



By the numbers: secondary employment & overtime

Each state is handling COVID-19 differently, which has created disparity between which businesses can resume operations and which cannot. In Florida, county guidelines have already changed more than once. Businesses have closed, reopened, then closed again as the rising number of positive COVID-19 cases causes concern.

However, as a company that works with law enforcement agencies across the U.S. and Canada, PowerDetails data analysis suggests that the number of secondary employment opportunities has started to rise again since the end of April.



Sample based on 54,000 officers & other first-responders across the U.S.A.



Best practices for adjusting off-duty & overtime detail policy during a pandemic

“As the number of cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to climb globally, law enforcement agencies continue to respond to communities on the front lines, despite the operational challenges the pandemic poses.”

On March 30, 2020, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) published a new Featured Policy Center Resource on their website that states, *“As the number of cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to climb globally, law enforcement agencies continue to respond to communities on the front lines, despite the operational challenges the pandemic poses.”*

“These operational challenges include inevitable shortages of employees and resources that make it essential for law enforcement agencies to establish plans and take measures in advance. Preparation will help ensure that crucial law enforcement services are not unreasonably disrupted and that employees are provided with the means to prevent or mitigate the spread of infection.”¹⁰

Now that we have a better understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on secondary employment and overtime, law enforcement agencies should consider making necessary revisions to their policies that are not only health-conscious, but also cost effective.

1. Reduce Personal Interaction
2. Eliminate Cash Transactions
3. Pay Rate Analysis
4. Include a Scheduling Fee



¹⁰ COVID-19 (Coronavirus)*: IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center



1. Reduce Personal Interaction

Finding ways to reduce unnecessary personal interaction at your agency is a great place to start. Before using PowerDetails, many of our customers were accustomed to officers being physically present for off-duty and overtime job distribution. This process is tedious, time-consuming, and, with the current threat of COVID-19, unsafe for personnel. Having an online platform for job coordination mitigates risk and helps your agency operate more efficiently.

2. Eliminate Cash Transactions

Dealing in cash comes with many problems that agencies should address. Aside from the obvious sanitation concerns, cash leaves little to no paper trail for agencies to keep track of their details and often presents opportunities for misconduct and unethical relationships with employers. Maintaining oversight of your officers' secondary employment work may feel overwhelming, but it is important to protect officers and reduce risk.

Utilizing technology-driven solutions to reduce the amount of time spent coordinating details not only improves efficiency, but also helps protect your agency against liability risks. As your agency continues to move towards ensuring trust and accountability, consider the option of switching to electronic payments. Electronic payments are quick, easy to use, trackable, and reduce the amount of interaction between officers/customers (vendors).

3. Pay Rate Analysis

As the threat of COVID-19 continues, agencies should consider reviewing the pay rate for officers working these jobs. A data analysis of 54,000 PowerDetails users shows that the average law enforcement officer works more than 170 hours of off-duty and special events each year. These details are critical for many officers, as they can account for up to 20% of their annual income¹¹.

The risk of working an off-duty job has increased and the number of officers willing to work these details is much fewer than it was prior to March 2020. Increasing the pay rate could help offset some of this lost revenue and improve the morale of your personnel.

4. Include a Scheduling Fee

Many agencies do not realize that they can offset the cost of digital tools like PowerDetails by including a scheduling fee when charging customers for off-duty details. Furthermore, technology-driven solutions allow agencies to generate digital estimates that prevent the agency, and the local taxpayers, from fronting the cost of a business' private security needs. If the duration of the job exceeds the original estimate, the system can automatically adjust the invoice to ensure accurate payment collection.

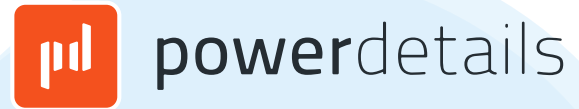
¹¹ PowerDetails Data Analysis: 2017, Based on an average pay rate of \$40 a hour and an average income of \$35,000 a year

Conclusion

COVID-19 has slowed many industries to a halt, but law enforcement is not one of them.

Despite a noticeable decline in secondary employment in March and April, PowerDetails data suggests that off-duty opportunities are beginning to rise again. The businesses that have been lucky enough to withstand the impact of COVID-19 still have to contend with many concerns, but security should not be one of them. As such, we expect the demand for private security to continue increasing, barring any major setbacks in the containment of the pandemic.

As officers engage in more off-duty work in the coming months, we urge agencies to be mindful of COVID-19's effects and employ policies that adequately protect both personnel and the communities they serve.



Want a FREE No-Commitment Needs Assessment?

Learn more about updating your Off-Duty & Overtime policies with PowerDetails to determine the best course of action for your agency.

Sign up to receive a Free Assessment

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