New Employee Guide

U.S. Department of Labor
Hilda L. Solis, Secretary

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Keith Hall, Commissioner

Revised 2009
Hundreds of billions of dollars of Federal funds are allocated to the states for programs such as job training, public works, welfare assistance, and child health insurance based on data from our Local Area Unemployment Statistics program and our Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

I am confident that you will find your work at BLS to be both challenging and rewarding —whether you are joining us mid-career or just starting out in public service as I did almost three decades ago (as a GS-7 staff economist with the Department of Treasury). I wish you the best of luck and again welcome you to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
The information in this guide should facilitate your transition to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and to your new job. The guide is divided into four sections. Section 1 provides information about the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS or the Bureau) and the Postal Square Building (PSB) where you will be working. Section 2 provides sources of information about finding housing in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Section 3 contains information about commuting options. Section 4 contains other transportation information, such as registering your automobile, transferring your driver’s license, and so forth.

This guide is intended to be used as a reference for finding most of the basic information you will need to move to this area and start work at BLS. It is not meant as an exhaustive reference. Our goal is to ease your transition to your new job by providing you with pertinent information.

As with all major cities, living in the Washington, D.C., area has advantages and disadvantages. The area offers many historic and cultural attractions, numerous colleges and universities, and a dynamic, diverse population. On the downside, traffic and costs associated with a big city are present.

The decision on where to live and how to get to work obviously will be yours alone. It may be that you will need to be in this area for some time before you are in a good position to determine the best living and commuting situation for you. Nonetheless, doing some homework now can help.

Occasional updates will be made to keep this guide current. This most recent update was completed in spring 2009. Because rates and fees change frequently, they are not included in this guide. Contact the appropriate entity for pricing.

If you have any comments or suggestions pertaining to the content of this guide, contact Roberto Morales at morales.roberto@bls.gov or (202) 691-6420. We hope you find this guide useful—not just now—but throughout your time in this area.

If you have questions about your BLS job, contact the Division of Human Resources and Organization Management at (202) 691-6600.

The information contained in this guide does not imply or provide an endorsement from BLS or the Federal Government.
Congratulations on Your New Job and Welcome to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and to the Nation’s Capital!

“We value our employees, and we are committed to providing the proper training for their jobs.”

Phil Rones
Deputy Commissioner

“We provide a working environment and state-of-the-art technology that will allow you to succeed in your job.”

Dan Lacey
Associate Commissioner for Administration

“We recruit outstanding individuals so our employees are second to none.”

Sydney Rose
Director of Human Resources
Congratulations on Your New Job and Welcome to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and to the Nation’s Capital!

Contents

Working at the BLS National Office

About BLS, Orientation, Educational Programs at BLS and Other Benefits.........................8
Postal Square Building (PSB) Facilities ..........10
Department of Labor (DOL) Facilities ..........13

Finding Housing in the Washington Metropolitan Area

Taxes ................................ 14
Primary Education (K-12), College, and Graduate School ..........15
Housing Search Sources ..................16
Housing Hunt Checklists ................17
Utilities ................................18
Electricity Service .................18
Gas Service .........................18
Telephone Service .................18
Cable and Dish Television ..........19
Tenants’ Rights and Rental Law ..........19

Commuting to the BLS National Office

Metrocheck Program ..................21
Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) ..............21
Other Transit Bus Systems ..............23
‘Red Alert’ Days ..................23
Maryland Rail Commuter Trains (MARC) ..................24
Virginia Railway Express (VRE) ..................25
Biking to Work ..................26
Carpooling ..................27
“Slugging” ..................27
Metered Parking ..................27

Other Transportation Information

Department of Motor Vehicles ..........28
District of Columbia ..................28
Maryland ..................29
Virginia ..................30
Airports ..................31
Buses (Intercity) ..................31
Amtrak ..................32
Short-term Car Rental/Car Sharing ..................32
Taxis ..................32
Working at the BLS national office

Working at BLS can be exciting and fulfilling. This, of course, will depend on the individual, as well as other factors. But we can say that many employees spend 10, 20, even 40 years working here. Employees who have spent a number of years at BLS cite their work, the people, the facilities, and other benefits provided to them as the reasons for staying here.

About BLS

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is the principal fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the broad field of labor economics and statistics. BLS collects, processes, analyzes, and disseminates essential statistical data to the American public, the U.S. Congress, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, businesses, labor organizations, and international statistical organizations.

BLS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The head of BLS holds the title of Commissioner. The Commissioner is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for a 4-year term. The Commissioner’s position is the only politically appointed position at BLS; all others, including managers, are civil servants. BLS hires talented individuals from all over the country. More than half are economists, and the next two largest groups are IT specialists and mathematical statisticians.

National Office Location: Postal Square Building (PSB)

In Washington, BLS employees work in the Postal Square Building (PSB). (Employees from other U.S. Department of Labor agencies work in other locations.) The Bureau’s national office is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE., Washington, DC 20212-0001. The District of Columbia is divided into four quadrants: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. When you report to work, remember that the PSB is in the Northeast (N.E.) quadrant. If you are using Metro, take the red line to Union Station, and use the First Street N.E. exit from the station. The Postal Square Building is located at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and First Street N.E. New employees without BLS identification (and all visitors) must use the entrance on First Street N.E., directly across from Union Station.

The historic Postal Square Building once housed the U.S. Postmaster’s offices and was the central post office for the city. Constructed in 1911-14, the building underwent a major renovation in the early 1990s, before BLS moved in during 1992. (The Smithsonian Institution’s National Postal Museum was established in PSB around the same time.) Some BLS office suites have windows facing the atrium, where staff can look down on the central floor of the museum, as well as see some early airmail planes that are suspended from the top of the atrium.
What should you expect the first couple of days

To ensure that the BLS labor force is well-qualified to do its job, BLS has designed four complementary levels of orientation and training for new employees: (1) Administrative orientation, (2) Job-specific training, (3) Corporate orientation, and (4) Office-specific orientation. Below is a brief overview of each training level.

Administrative Orientation

On your first day at BLS, you, along with other new employees, will attend the administrative orientation. At this orientation, you will be given information about benefits, such as a transit subsidy, health insurance, life insurance, and the retirement savings plan. In addition, you will be fingerprinted for Federal employee records purposes, and arrangements will be made to create a Federal employee identification card (ID) for you. Entrance to PSB requires passing through security, for both visitors and employees. Each day, you will need your BLS ID card to enter the building and, in some cases, to enter the office suite where you will be working. Usually, at a later date, but as part of administrative orientation, new employees meet the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner. The administrative orientation is designed to provide the essential information a new employee needs to start work. Subsequent orientations will expand that information and will provide additional and more specific information.

When the administrative orientation session is complete, you will report to your supervisor. Your supervisor will introduce you to co-workers and will make arrangements to give you access to various BLS computer accounts. When you have received a computer account and access to the BLS computer network, you will be able to connect to the Bureau’s employee intranet called BLS Central. BLS Central provides a wealth of information, such as a calendar of events happening at BLS, administrative information, Bureau-wide organizational charts, and floor plans. In addition to BLS Central, most major program offices maintain their own intranet, Web pages or sites with office-specific information.

Job-Specific Training

Shortly after you join BLS, you will begin your job-specific training. This training will ensure that you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully execute the duties and responsibilities assigned to you. The nature of the job-specific training varies by office, with some offices using a formal approach and others an informal one.

Corporate Orientation

Within the first 3 months at BLS, you will be scheduled to attend BLS corporate orientation. This program provides an overview of the BLS mission, initiatives, organizational structure, values, products, and customers, as well as the role of BLS in the Federal and international statistical communities. Having an understanding of how your specific job helps accomplish the mission of the Bureau will help you realize the importance of your work. The BLS corporate orientation is presented by BLS executives, managers, and other BLS employees who have significant knowledge or experience on each of the topics.

Office-Specific Orientation

Office-specific orientation programs focus on the culture and work of individual offices in the overall organization and mission of BLS. Individual program offices vary greatly in the level of office-specific training conducted for their employees. It’s expected that, in the near future, all offices will conduct an office-wide orientation.
Employee Development and Other Benefits

In an effort to keep employees abreast of the latest, most-advanced technologies, BLS provides excellent opportunities for job-related and career development courses through the Bureau’s training center, BLS University, DOL, other government agencies, as well as colleges and universities.

As a BLS employee, you are eligible for tuition assistance, depending on annual training budgets. You can take either undergraduate or graduate courses at various colleges or universities.

A variety of professional courses at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels are offered onsite. Instructors for these classes have years of experience in their specific fields, as well as practical knowledge of various technological areas.

BLS offers online, or virtual, training courses as an alternative to traditional classroom training and education. Online training can provide you with opportunities to enhance your professional, business, and technological skills to meet ever-changing workplace requirements. Personal and professional skills can be enhanced through two DOL online university sites. Just think of it as training at the click of your mouse! Find out specific details and obtain approval from your supervisor before signing up for courses.

Social Activities

BLS does not officially sponsor social activities, but BLS employees organize softball, soccer, and golf activities, holiday parties, book discussion groups, seminars, and food-tasting events. For information on these activities, check the calendar of events at BLS Central or ask your supervisor.

Postal Square Building (PSB) Facilities

BLS employees have access to conveniently located facilities in PSB, such as a fitness center, a health unit, the DOL Credit Union, and a cafeteria. Employees who carpool to work may apply for PSB garage parking.

BLS has a number of building safety plans for its employees. You will be informed of fire and other procedures once you start work.

Fitness Center

If you like to exercise, you can join the Fitness Center of BLS (FAB), located in Room G455 of PSB. The cost is low, and the convenience of being able to work out before work hours, during lunch, or after work is priceless.

The fitness center is fully equipped. It has men's and women's locker rooms (with showers), a mirrored aerobic room, a separate Cybex strength training room, and a main exercise floor that consists of cardiovascular equipment, free weights, and a stretching area. Additionally, FAB offers top-quality aerobics, step, body works, yoga, and
core-strength exercise classes. Lockers are available for daily use or 6-month rentals. For information on the fitness center, call (202) 691-7809. Currently, the center is open M–F 6:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.

**Shower/Locker Facilities**

Shower and locker facilities are located on the first floor. These facilities are available to all employees and are shared with the building’s maintenance staff. There are five showers in each of these rooms and a number of lockers available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Employees may use these facilities at no cost. Room 1870 is for women, and room 1880 is for men. For more information, contact Administrative Services, Room 1830, (202) 691-6007.

**Occupational Health Center**

The health unit is operated by the Federal Employee Occupational Health Service (FEOH) and staffed on a full-time basis with a FEOH registered nurse, and on a part-time basis with an FEOH registered nurse and physician. Free services include walk-in care, emergency response, bed rest, physical exams, blood pressure monitoring, immunizations, individual health counseling, health information, and other services. For more information on the Occupational Health Center, send an e-mail to psbmed@bls.gov, go to Room 2870, or call (202) 691-6666. Currently, the health unit is open from 8:15 a.m.–4:15 p.m. but is closed for lunch. (Emergencies can also be handled 4:15–4:45 p.m., otherwise, call 911.)

**PSB Cafeteria**

The cafeteria serves breakfast and lunch and features a salad bar, including fresh fruit, and a deli, priced by the ounce. You can get daily hot lunch specials from the hot food section and a variety of burgers, fries, and sandwiches from the grill section. (Employees are allowed to bring their own food into the cafeteria.) The weekly menu is available on BLS Central. The cafeteria is located on the first floor. The phone number is (202) 691-6312, and the hours of operation are: M–F 6:30 a.m.–3 p.m.
DOL Federal Credit Union

All DOL and BLS employees and contractors are eligible for DOL Credit Union (DOLFCU) membership. A DOLFCU ATM is located on the first floor. The PSB Branch office is in room 2665, (202) 691-7980. Hours: M–F 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m. For more information, visit the Web site: www.dolfcu.org.

Recreation Association Center

This center offers snacks, movie tickets, specialty items, and much more at low prices. Guest vendors regularly display merchandise—from best-selling books to cellular phones to jewelry. The center is open to all employees and contractors. Membership entitles you to discounts on merchandise, movie tickets, and other specials. For membership costs and other information, contact the DOL Recreation Center located in room 3630 Monday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 a.m.–3 p.m. or by phone: (202) 691-5339. (A second facility is available in the Frances Perkins Building.)

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program is available to assist you with marital, family, financial, legal, psychological, or other problems. All information is held in strict confidence. For more information, visit room 5245, or call (202) 691-6646; hours: Friday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Government Travel

The contracting company that provides travel management for the U.S. Department of Labor also provides travel support services to BLS employees who travel on BLS official business. For information, go to room 2650 or call (202) 842-1422 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, during 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Garage Parking

BLS provides a limited number of parking spaces and bicycle racks in the Postal Square Building for its executive staff, handicapped employees, and employees who ride in vanpools and carpools. After-hours parking is available for all employees, but you need to obtain a permit. For more information, contact Administrative Services, room 1830, (202) 691-6007.

Across from PSB is Union Station

Opened on October 27, 1907, and completed in 1908, Union Station (pictured below), like the Postal Square Building, is considered one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts architecture in Washington, D.C. This three-level building is one of the most-visited destinations in the Nation’s capital with more than 23.5 million visitors a year. Union Station is located at 40 Massachusetts Ave., NE., directly across the street from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Union Station has a food court with more than 30 vendors and a movie theater, post office, shopping center, and several restaurants.
Department of Labor (DOL) Facilities

As a BLS employee, you have access to the facilities in the DOL main building, the Frances Perkins Building (FPB). The FPB is located at 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20210. The facilities include career assistance, childcare, a dry cleaner, racquet ball courts, cafeteria, and post office. The childcare center is located in room N1453; (202) 693-7979.

Counseling services also are available to assist employees in planning their career steps. Counseling may include: assessment, career exploration, decision-making, and development of a training plan. To schedule an appointment, call the DOL Career Assistance Center (located in room C5324) at (202) 693-7637 or 693-7658.

For dry cleaning services, call (202) 842-0232.
This section will help you obtain the information needed in deciding where to live and to find housing. We focused on rental housing information, since most of our new employees moving to the area will rent for at least a few months even if they plan to purchase a home. When deciding where to live, you need to consider your transportation options, cost of housing, educational plans, and taxes. Cost of housing is not covered in this guide, because it changes too frequently. The Washington Post Web site has an interactive feature to help you gather neighborhood information such as schools, hospitals, crime statistics, home prices, etc., in the greater D.C. area:

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/rentals/dcarealiving/

Most employees, naturally, will look for housing in the District of Columbia and its nearby suburban communities. Following are some tax and educational sources you may need, as well as other sources for finding housing.

**Taxes**

State taxes may be a factor in determining where you choose to live. To obtain information on the taxes in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, visit the following Web sites.

- **Washington, D.C.**
  - www.otc.fco.dc.gov/otr/site/default.asp

- **Maryland**
  - www.dat.state.md.us

- **Virginia**
  - www.tax.virginia.gov
Primary Education (K-12), College, and Graduate School

The education of your children and your own continuing education may be a factor in your decision about where to live in the Washington area. Below is a list of several Web sites that provide information on public schools and some of the colleges and universities in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

On the following Web sites, you can find county-specific K-12 public school information.

**Washington, D.C.**
www.k12.dc.us

**Maryland (counties)**
Anne Arundel
www.aacps.org
Calvert
www.calvertnet.k12.md.us
Charles
www.ccboe.com
Frederick
www.fcps.org
Howard
www.hcpss.org
Montgomery
www.mcps.k12.md.us
Prince George’s
www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us

**Virginia**
Alexandria
www.acps.k12.va.us
Arlington
www.arlington.k12.va.us

**Select Colleges and Universities**

**Washington, D.C.**
American University
www.american.edu
Catholic University of America
www.cua.edu
Gallaudet University
www.gallaudet.edu
George Washington University
www.gwu.edu
Georgetown University
www.georgetown.edu
Howard University
www.howard.edu
University of the District of Columbia
www.udc.edu
USDA Graduate School
www.grad.usda.gov

Maryland
Johns Hopkins University
www.jhu.edu
Loyola College in Maryland
www.loyola.edu
Morgan State University
www.morgan.edu
Towson University
www.towson.edu
University of Maryland
www.umd.edu

Virginia
George Mason University
www.gmu.edu
Northern Virginia Community College
www.nvcc.edu

Additionally, Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia have graduate centers adjacent to the West Falls Church Metro Station.

Housing Search Sources

Washington Post
Choose ‘Rentals’ from either ‘Classifieds’ or ‘Real Estate’ on the homepage dropdown menu bar. Searchable online version of print classifieds and apartments.com listings.

Washington Times
Print: Check the Classifieds section. Home Guide section on Friday. Online: www.washingtontimes.com
Classifieds available online – go to ‘Classifieds’ on the left menu bar. Home Guide also available online – on the left menu bar below ‘Classifieds’.

Washington City Paper
Print: Free weekly published every Thursday afternoon. Available at newsstands around the area. Online: www.washingtoncitypaper.com
Classifieds are available online and updated daily. Choose ‘Classifieds’ on the homepage menu.

Washington DC Examiner
Print classifieds available online – choose ‘Classifieds’ on the homepage. Search site for apartment listings. Also provides quotes for moving and other helpful services and links.
**Housing Hunt Checklists**

**Things to take with you on a site visit:**

- Photo ID
- Checkbook
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of any previous landlords
- Social Security number
- Employment information
- Copy of BLS offer letter (to prove employment)
- Personal references
- List of questions for landlord
- (Optional) copy of credit report

**Questions to ask when viewing housing:**

- Are utilities included? If not, what are the average utility bills?
- Cable or Dish TV/Internet provider
- Laundry?
- Storage?
- Resident and/or guest parking?
- Security staff?
- Package delivery arrangements?
- Air conditioning?
- Are the building and the neighborhood safe and secure?
- How are repairs handled? Holiday/after-hours repairs?
- Are there special move-in times or procedures?
- What separates apartments to protect tenants from noise?
- If there are hardwood floors, is there a rule about carpeting the floors?
- How many people may live in the unit (if renting for more than one person)?
- What is the guest policy (is there a time limit)?
- What is the penalty for early lease termination?
- Does the landlord allow subletting?
- Does the lease go month-to-month at the end of the initial period?
- Is it possible to get receipts for any application fees and/or deposits?
- Pet policy?

**Checklist of other items to note in your lease:**

- Time required for tenant or landlord to give notice about moving out
- Policies for renting after the lease period
- Responsibility for utilities
- Conditions for apartment repair
- Conditions if a roommate defaults on rent
- Conditions if tenant refuses rent increase
- Rules for subletting
- Times and policies for returning the security deposit
Hostels

Hostels are a great place to stay while looking for permanent housing. It is always a good idea to come to the Washington, D.C., area before making your final decision on your permanent housing. A hostel is a relatively cheap option for those who don’t want to stay in a hotel. Hostels provide inexpensive dormitory-style accommodations with separate quarters for males and females. Below are three examples:

Hilltop Hostel
300 Carroll St., NW., Washington, DC 20012
(202) 291-9591
www.hosteldc.com

HI-Washington DC
1009 11th St., NW., Washington, DC 20001
(202) 737-2333 and (800) 909-4776
www.hiwashingtondc.org

Norwich International Guest House
4607 Norwich Rd., College Park, MD 20740
(240) 472-2572
www.norwichhouse.us

Utilities

In some rental properties, utilities are included, so you do not have to do anything to activate them; in others they are not, so you are responsible for activating them. To avoid delays and other inconveniences, contact the utility companies to set up an account and activate service before moving into your apartment or house. (It is important to do so before moving in, since this may take several days.)

Electricity Service

Electricity services vary from city to city and state to state. Make sure to inquire about provider choices and electricity regulations in your area. For example, electricity generation services have been deregulated in the District of Columbia, so while PEPCO is still the provider of all electricity, consumers can choose who generates the electricity they purchase through PEPCO. PEPCO can provide information on the selection of electricity-generation companies. Many areas also have electricity cooperatives that operate locally.

Washington, D.C.
PEPCO – (202) 833-7500 and (800) 424-8028

Maryland
PEPCO – (202) 833-5000
BGE – (800)-685-0123

Virginia
Dominion Power – (888) 667-3000
Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative – (703) 335-0500

Gas Service

Two major carriers serve the entire metro area, regardless of state: Washington Gas and BGE.

Washington Gas
6801 Industrial Rd., Springfield, VA 22151
(703) 750-1000 and (800) 752-7520
www.washgas.com

BGE
110 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201
(800)-685-0123
www.bge.com

Telephone Service

There are a number of telephone providers available in the D.C. area. Verizon is the major carrier.
www.verizon.com/residential/phone

Local telephone service: Verizon – (202) 954-6263
Hours: M-F, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
Cable and Dish Television

Cable is typically offered by one major provider in each area, although competition is growing throughout the area – especially from companies that provide other services, such as Internet service, in addition to cable. Dish Network and Direct TV are alternatives to cable. For additional information, visit their Web sites:

www.dishnetwork.com
www.directtv.com

Comcast Cable
Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia
www.comcast.com

Washington, D.C. – (202) 635-5100

Maryland
Annapolis – (410) 268-7551
Anne Arundel County – (410) 987-8600
Baltimore – (410) 427-9600
Charles County – (301) 645-9300
Howard County – (410) 461-1156
Montgomery County – (410) 424-4400
Prince George’s County – (800) 443-2072

Virginia
Alexandria – (703) 461-4499
Arlington – (703) 358-2782
Dale City – (703) 670-0189
Manassas – (703) 368-4227

Cox Cable
www.cox.com
Fairfax County – (703) 378-8400

Tenants’ Rights and Rental Law

For information on tenants’ rights and tenant laws, contact the agencies listed under Advocacy Resources for each of the jurisdictions.

Washington, D.C.
Contact the Advocacy Resources Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs, (202) 442-4400
www.dcra.dc.gov
See the “Landlord and Tenant Help and Tips for Tenants”

Maryland
Contact the Commission on Human Relations, (410) 767-8600
Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division, (410) 576-6550

Virginia
Contact the Fair Housing Office, (804) 367-8530
Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Office of Consumer Affairs, (804) 786-2042
Washington, D.C., is a city sandwiched amidst rapidly growing suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. Traffic congestion can be a problem. Where you live and your schedule will help determine the best means of transportation to and from work, as well as around the entire region. This section is designed to acquaint you with many of the transportation options available for commuting to and from work. The good news is that you have many options to choose from, such as the subway, bus, train, carpooling, driving yourself, or even bicycling.

Working at the BLS Postal Square Building offers the unique advantage of being located across from Union Station, which serves all available rail systems in the area, including Metrorail, Metrobus, Amtrak trains, and Maryland and Virginia commuter trains, MARC and VRE, respectively. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates local and commuter bus services that link to rail stations, park-and-ride lots, and other transit offerings.

To obtain information on public transportation, visit the following Web sites. (Additionally, the governments of D.C., Virginia, and Maryland all have Web sites that provide assistance with planning and scheduling your commute.)

Metrorail and Metrobus
www.wmata.com

Maryland Transit Administration
www.mtamaryland.com

Virginia Department of Transportation
www.virginiadot.org

Virginia Railway Express
www.vre.org

Washington D.C. traffic conditions
www.washingtonpost.com/traffic

Passes/tickets for D.C. area travel
www.commuterdirect.com/

Commuter Connections
www.mwcog.org/commuter/ccindex.html
Metrochek Program

One of the advantages of working for BLS is that the agency offers a transit subsidy for employees using public transportation, by providing a monthly subsidy to help cover commuting expenses. To receive this subsidy, you must enroll in the BLS Metrochek program. (You should be given the required application during the first day at work.) The amount received is based on your monthly cost to commute using public transportation (Metro, MARC, VRE, buses, etc.) to the Postal Square Building. If you do not use public transportation, you will not receive the transit subsidy.

Metro System

The Metro System is the regional bus and rail public transit system in the central Washington, D.C., area, operating in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland. The Metro System is administered by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Metrorail or Subway

Metrorail is the subway system, often referred to simply as “Metro” or “the subway.” Metro’s Web site provides full information on station locations, fares, hours of operations, and interactive trip planners. www.wmata.com

Metrorail Fares

To ride Metrorail, you need either a farecard, pass, Metrochek, or SmarTrip card. In addition to the information listed below, see the WMATA Web site for current details about Metro passes and farecards.

Note that fares and frequency of trains vary depending on time and day of week.

Purchase farecards only from authorized sale outlets listed on the WMATA Web site (farecard vending machines in Metrorail stations, Metro sales offices, online, etc.). Farecards sold elsewhere might be forged or stolen, and may be rejected by Metrorail faregates.

Metrorail Farecards

Farecards are paper cards with fare information stored on a magnetic strip. They can be bought at farecard vending machines located at each station using a credit/debit card or cash. (Be advised, though, that farecard machines give up to $5 change in coins only, so make sure to bring small bills.) You can also buy farecards worth $10, $15, or $20 online. Farecards are not refundable, but exchanges will be made for malfunctioning farecards.

Metrorail Passes

All Metrorail passes are gate-activated. The faregate activates the pass the first time it is used and prints the last valid date on the pass.


**SmarTrip**

A SmarTrip card is a reusable, rechargeable plastic farecard with an embedded special computer chip that keeps track of the value of the card. It can hold up to $300 in Metrorail, Metrobus, and Metro parking value. The card costs $5 and can be recharged when its balance is low. SmarTrip accepts a used farecard of any denomination to be added to its value. An advantage of the card is that if you lose it, you don’t lose the value on the card, provided you register your card. If registered, for a $5 fee to replace the card, you can get a new SmarTrip card with the value on the lost card at the time you notified it was lost.

To use it, instead of inserting a farecard through the faregate slot, you simply touch the SmarTrip card to the circular target panels on top of the faregates. For more information, you can check WMATA’s SmarTrip Web site.

**MetroAccess**

MetroAccess is Metro’s curb-to-curb paratransit service, complementing Metrorail, Metrobus, and local bus service for people with disabilities. You can find more information about MetroAccess on the WMATA Web site.

[www.commuterpage.com](http://www.commuterpage.com) has more information on paratransit services in other areas.

**Parking at Metrorail Stations**

Limited parking (available all day, up to 24 hours) is available at some Metro-operated parking lots. Daily parking fees vary by station and are posted at the parking entrance/exit, as well as on the Web site. (Parking at Metro-operated lots is FREE on weekends and Federal holidays.) Fares are collected upon exit at most stations, between 9 a.m. and closing time of the rail system and must be paid using SmarTrip cards. (You will not be able to exit Metro parking lots unless your SmarTrip card has enough money on it to pay the full parking fee.) SmarTrip cards are sold through vending machines at all stations where parking is available, as well as at Metro sales offices, retail outlets, commuter stores, and online on the WMATA Web site. WMATA also has information about reserved monthly parking spaces.
Metrobus

Metrobus is the area’s regional bus service, operating on approximately 350 routes. The WMATA Metrobus Service Maps page has maps showing all the Metrobus and local bus routes in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as bus timetables by jurisdiction.

Metrobus Passes

Metrobus passes are date-specific. They are valid during the dates indicated on the pass. Weekly passes are good from Sunday through Saturday. The WMATA Web site has a list of the different Metrobus passes. If you don’t have either a Metrobus pass or a SmartTrip card, make sure you have exact change for the fare; Metrobus drivers don’t carry cash.

Other Transit Bus Systems

A few communities in the metropolitan area, such as the District of Columbia; Montgomery County in Maryland; and Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax in Virginia operate additional bus lines that supplement the Metrobus system. For routes, fares, and times, visit the respective Web sites.

D.C. Circulator

Operates in D.C.: Union Station to Georgetown and from SW Waterfront to the D.C. Convention Center. Hours: Every 5-10 minutes daily from 7 a.m.—9 p.m. SmarTrip cards are accepted.
www.dccirculator.com

Georgetown Metro Connection

Serves all Metrobus stops in Georgetown; express service between Georgetown and Foggy Bottom-GGWU, Rosslyn and Dupont Circle Metro stations approximately every 10 minutes.
Monday–Thursday: 7 a.m.—midnight
Friday: 7 a.m.—2 a.m.
Saturday: 8 a.m.—2 a.m.
Sunday: 8 a.m.—midnight
Times are subject to change.
www.georgetowndc.com

Ride On Bus

Available in Montgomery County, Maryland
www.montgomerycounty.gov

DASH Bus

Available in Alexandria, Virginia
www.dashbus.com

ART (Arlington Transit)

Available in Arlington, Virginia
www.commuterpage.com

Fairfax Connector

Routes run between various locations in Fairfax County and from the county to Arlington, Virginia.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/

Handicap Services

Many buses are equipped with platforms that lower to the curb to lift passengers and wheelchairs on board. Once on board, the wheelchair is secured in a reserved area. Policies differ, depending on the bus company. To learn what various bus companies offer, contact the company directly.

‘Red Alert’ Days

On some days during the summer, the Washington region experiences poor air quality that can adversely affect the health of the elderly or those with respiratory difficulties. When the National Weather Service issues a ‘Red Alert’ for air quality in the region, the bus fare may be waived for regional bus services.
Maryland Rail Commuter Trains (MARC)

Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) is a commuter rail service from the District of Columbia to surrounding areas in Maryland and West Virginia. MARC consists of three lines in and out of the city:

- **Penn Line** uses Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor line and runs between Washington, Baltimore (Penn Station), and Perryville, Maryland.
- **Camden Line** uses the CSX route between Washington and Baltimore (Camden Station).
- **Brunswick Line** uses the CSX Route between Washington, Brunswick, Frederick, Maryland, and Martinsburg, West Virginia.

www.mtamaryland.com/services/marc

**MARC Fares and Schedules**

MARC fares and schedules can be obtained at any MARC station or at the MTA Web site.

**MARC Tickets**

Tickets for MARC trains are sold at all Amtrak ticket counters, at MARC stations, on MARC’s fares and passes Web site, at Commuter Store locations in Virginia, by mail order 1 (888) 226-5515, over the Internet at www.commuterdirect.com, and at other transit stores.

Important MARC Facts

- MARC train service operates Monday through Friday only.
- Tickets can be purchased on the train when no ticket agent is available (cash or check only).
- Tickets purchased on trains are subject to a $3 penalty, IF the ticket office was open at train departure time.
- MARC tickets are honored on unreserved Amtrak trains covering equivalent areas of travel along MARC routes.
- Parking is free at parking lots that exclusively serve MARC trains.
- A Guaranteed Ride Home Program is available, in case of unscheduled overtime, family illness, or an emergency.

**MARC Links**

www.mtamaryland.com
MARC system maps, schedules, fares, and information

www.commuterpage.com
MARC online ticket sales and commuting information

www.washingtonpost.com
Traffic reports on roadways and Metrorail system conditions
Virginia Railway Express (VRE)

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is the commuter train connecting northern Virginia to Washington, D.C. VRE operates two lines out of Union Station: the Manassas line and the Fredericksburg line. Service begins weekdays at 5 a.m. and ends at approximately 7 p.m. There is no weekend service. However, you can use your VRE ticket on selected Amtrak trains (both during the week and on weekends). [www.vre.org](http://www.vre.org)

VRE Fares and Schedules

The two VRE lines are divided into zones. The zones begin at central DC (Union Station and L’Enfant Plaza) and go out in circles from there. Fares depend on which line you’re traveling on and how many zones you traverse. VRE schedules and VRE fare information are available at any VRE station or on the VRE Web site.

VRE Tickets

Available tickets types:
- VRE-TLC (Transit Link Card)
- Monthly ticket
- 5-Day pass
- Ten-Trip ticket
- Amtrak Step-Up ticket
- Single-Ride ticket

Some tickets are non-refundable, while others follow a strict refund policy. Note: Tickets are NOT sold on board VRE trains.

Validating Your Ticket Before Boarding

Ten-Trip and Single-Ride tickets need to be validated each time before you board the train at the ticket vending/validator machines in each station entrance area. The machines work like punch card time clocks. Insert the end of your ticket with the arrows into the machine, and it will punch the ticket. TLC and monthly tickets must be signed to be valid. If you are unable to validate your ticket by the use of the validation machine, you must speak with the conductor prior to boarding the train.

Passengers observed onboard without a valid ticket are subject to a fine of not less than $150.

Important VRE Facts

- VRE doesn’t run on weekends or Federal holidays.
- Amtrak trains are available on some holidays.
- Refer to the Amtrak section of this handbook in Buses and Trains (intercity).
- Tickets are NOT sold on board VRE trains.
- Delays do occur. Call (800) RIDE-VRE for information about delays, or go to the VRE rail time Web site.

In case of unscheduled overtime, family illness, or an emergency, VRE offers the free Guaranteed Ride Home Program. (See Web site.)
Biking To Work

Before deciding to ride your bike to work, get information on the various local bike traffic rules, Metro bike rules, and facilities that can help you avoid accidents or fines. Remember that laws can vary by jurisdiction. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) provides free bike education classes on city riding. For additional information, visit their Web site: www.waba.org/.

Metro Rules for Bikes

- Only regular bikes (no tricycles, training wheels, etc.) are permitted.
- Bikes are NOT permitted during rush hour. (7–10 a.m. and 4–7 p.m. M–F)
- Do NOT use escalators. Use elevators at all times.
- You can board with a bike on any train car in either the first or last door. Do NOT use center doors.
- Bicycle lockers are available for rental at many Metro stations.

For more information, see: www.wmata.com/metrorail/bikes.cfm.

PSB Bike Permits

BLS provides bike racks for employees to park their bikes in the downstairs garage. Bike permits for the parking garage can be obtained through the online parking permit application found on BLS Central. Any BLS employee may obtain a bike permit.

PSB Parking Permits

BLS encourages carpooling by offering a limited number of free parking spaces in the garage under PSB for employees who operate carpools. Permits are also given to persons with disabilities and senior executive staff. To qualify for a parking permit, you must be part of a carpool (or vanpool) with a minimum of two people (driver included). BLS assigns point values to carpool applicants based on riders who sign on to a given carpool application. Tenured BLS employees receive the most points, while various other points are assigned to other PSB workers, DOL employees, and other Federal workers. Annual applications for permits are due by mid-January, and permits are distributed in late February. Along with car permits, motorcycle and bicycle parking permits are available.

Please note that you cannot participate in both BLS-sponsored commuter programs. If you receive a Metrochek, your name cannot be on a parking permit application (except for an after-hours permit). Likewise, if you are part of a parking permit application, you cannot receive Metrocheks.

The Division of Administrative Services also offers an after-hours permit that allows you to park in the PSB garage after normal business hours and on the weekends. (You may obtain this permit while also participating in the Metrochek program.)
Carpooling

In addition to traveling with BLS employees and other government workers via carpool/vanpool, you can check the following services for forming carpooling groups:

www.commuterconnections.org
Web site for carpools/vanpools, search Park and Ride locations, and other commuter information.

www.carpoolconnect.com
ZIP code-based carpool matching service

www.commuterpage.com
Web site with commuting information including carpool/vanpool

Park and Ride lots were created to assist commuters with carpooling efforts. These lots, usually found in Virginia and some parts of Maryland, are set along highly used routes of travel and do not charge for parking. In addition to providing parking space for carpool/vanpool riders, Park and Ride lots serve commuting buses in Maryland and Virginia. For more information on Park and Ride lots, check the www.commuterpage.com Web site.

“Slugging”

Another option for carpooling into the D.C. metro area from Virginia is to “slug.” “Slugging” is a term used to describe a unique form of commuting, sometimes referred to as “Instant Carpooling” or “Casual Carpooling,” where you stand by the side of the road in designated areas (usually off I-395/I-95) and wait for drivers to pick you up and take you into the District of Columbia. No money is exchanged, because of the mutual benefit of slugging: The driver needs riders to use the 3-person high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane, and “slugs” need a ride. Although you may be traveling with strangers, slugging is an organized system with its own set of rules, proper etiquette, and specific pickup and drop-off locations. For more information about how slugging works, check the slugging Web site: www.slug-lines.com.

Metered Parking

Parking meters around BLS generally require payment in quarters and allow a maximum of 2 hours. A quarter usually buys 30 minutes. The exception is parking spaces on North Capitol Street near PSB, where a quarter buys 20 minutes. Parking at a meter is best suited for an employee stopping in for a short time. Metered spaces around PSB usually fill up early each day.

Be aware that about half the metered parking in D.C. is actually the curb travel lane of the street. Therefore, these spaces are not available until 9:30 a.m. and must be vacated in the afternoon, usually by 3 p.m. Signs are usually posted nearby that state that there is no parking from 6:00 or 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Also note that most parking lots near PSB fill up quickly. If you choose to drive, arriving early or using a monthly pass to reserve a parking lot space is encouraged.
This section provides important information that motor vehicle owners will need to know to comply with state or District requirements. It also contains information on the alternative modes of transportation available in the D.C. area.

**Department of Motor Vehicles**

Each state requires that its residents register their vehicles. While the process differs from state to state, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia require that you have a valid driver’s license to register or title a vehicle. If you do not have a valid driver’s license, refer to the appropriate motor vehicle office for specific instructions on how to obtain a license.

The motor vehicle offices serve hundreds of customers each day; therefore, allow at least 2–3 hours for registering your vehicle. Many forms are now available online at the state/District Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Web sites.

**District of Columbia**

*Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)*

Contact information: (202) 727-5000 or online at [www.dmv.dc.gov](http://www.dmv.dc.gov)

*Vehicle Registration*

District of Columbia (D.C.) law requires that all vehicles housed and operated in the District be registered in the District, unless the owner displays a reciprocity sticker issued by DMV. Persons moving to the District who have a valid...
registration from another jurisdiction have **30 days** from the date of entering D.C. to obtain a registration.

You can register and title your vehicle at a DMV service location. To register your vehicle, you will need to satisfy D.C. emissions and safety inspection requirements (see below) and must not have any outstanding tickets. In addition, you will need the following: The title, current D.C. vehicle insurance, a D.C. driver’s license (or D.C. non-driver identification card), a car bill of sale (new car) and proof of a valid odometer statement. Individuals will need to provide lien or lessee contracts if they are currently used for their vehicles.

**Vehicle Emissions and Safety Inspection**

To initially register your vehicle, you must first determine if it requires a D.C. emissions and safety inspection. The only exceptions are brand new vehicles from dealerships and pre-owned vehicles that already have valid inspection stickers.

The District’s vehicle emissions and safety inspection station is at 1001 Half Street, SW. D.C. The telephone number is (202) 645-4300. Upon arrival at the inspection station, be sure to have your valid out-of-state registration and proof of insurance. If the vehicle fails inspection, get a copy of the repair recommendation and information sheet from the inspection team. For more information (i.e., site hours of operation etc.), go to: www.dmv.dc.gov/serv/inspections.shtm

**Maryland Motor Vehicles Administration (MVA)**

Contact information: 1 (800) 950-1682 or online at www.marylandmva.com

**Vehicle Registration**

As a new resident of Maryland, you must register your vehicle and obtain a driver’s license within **60 days** of moving to Maryland. If you delay beyond 60 days, you will not be eligible for a tax credit for any titling tax paid in another state, and you may be subject to a citation for an out-of-state registration. To initially register your out-of-state vehicle you will need: Title, proof of Maryland vehicle insurance, Maryland safety inspection (see below), and proof of payment of Maryland state vehicle tax (done at an MVA office). In addition, a Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP) inspection shall be done before or after the initial registration. (See below.)

You can apply for a Maryland title and registration in person at any of the MVA full-service branch offices. You also can mail the documents to the MVA Out-of-State Title Unit, 6601 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie, MD 21062, or go to an MVA licensed tag and title service.

There are two types of MVA offices in Maryland: full-service offices and express offices. Full service offices provide all services, including vehicle registration, licensing, road tests and titling. Express offices provide limited services, such as, driver’s license renewal service, license tag drop-off service and photo ID service. For more information (i.e., site hours of operation etc.), go to:

www.marylandmva.com  
www.marylandmva.com/VehicleServ/REG/NewtoMd.htm
Vehicle Emissions and Safety Inspection
The Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP) is designed by the state of Maryland to reduce pollution. Once you register your vehicle, you will receive a test notice from the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA). You will have about 8 weeks to inspect your vehicle. You can complete the VEIP at 19 stations throughout Maryland. For more information go to: www.marylandmva.com/AboutMVA/INFO/58000VEI/58000-06T.htm#appendixB

Before registration of your vehicle, new residents to Maryland must obtain a Maryland Safety Inspection Certificate for ALL vehicles being titled and registered in Maryland. This form certifies that your vehicle meets Maryland safety standards. The safety inspection is performed by a licensed Maryland inspection station, such as automobile dealers, service stations and specialized automobile service centers. A certificate of inspection issued by the inspection station, within the previous 90 days of the vehicle titling, must accompany the application for title. To avoid delay, compare the vehicle identification number (VIN) entered on the inspection certificate with the VIN on the vehicle plus the vehicle ownership documents to make certain they agree. Altered inspection certificates will not be accepted. Remember for registration purposes, the safety inspection is valid for up to 90 days from the date of issuance.

www.marylandmva.com/VehicleServ/REG/NewtoMd.htm

Virginia
Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
Contact information: 1 (866) DMVLINE 1 (866) 368-5463 or 1 (800) 435-5137 or online at www.dmv.virginia.gov/

Vehicle Registration
As a new resident of Virginia, you must register and title your vehicle and obtain Virginia license plates within 30 days of moving to Virginia. To initially register your vehicle you will need the following: Meet Virginia's vehicle insurance requirements, provide the title for the vehicle, provide an emissions certificate that shows “pass” (see below), and provide a proof of insurance in Virginia. A safety inspection is required immediately after registration.

For more information, see: www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/vehicles/vehiclereg.asp

Vehicle Emissions and Safety Inspection
Your vehicle must pass an emissions inspection before registration if garaged in the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, or Stafford, or the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, or Manassas Park.

If your vehicle is being registered for the first time in Virginia and has a current valid emissions certificate (performed in the last 12 months) from one of the following states, it may be titled and registered without a Virginia emissions inspection: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, or Wisconsin.

Emissions inspections in Virginia are valid for 2 years and may be obtained by having your vehicle inspected at a certified emissions inspection station. When you have your vehicle inspected in Virginia, the emissions station will update your vehicle record at DMV. For a list of inspection stations, see: www.dmv.virginia.gov/exec/link.asp?12

Once you have registered a vehicle with the division of motor vehicles in the state of Virginia, it must meet safety inspection requirements immediately; there is no grace period. All used vehicles are required to pass an initial safety inspection. New vehicles purchased in Virginia, which have been inspected in accordance with an inspection requirement of the manufacturer or distributors, are not required to undergo the initial safety inspection.
Long-Distance Travel

After a few months in the Washington metropolitan area, you may want to visit other cities in the Northeast or the rest of the country. Here are some transportation options you may want to consider.

Airports

There are three main airports in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

**Baltimore Washington International (BWI)**
This airport is about 45 minutes from the center of Washington, D.C.
Phone (410) 859-7111
www.bwiairport.com

**Ronald Reagan National (DCA)**
This airport is about 5 minutes from the center of Washington, D.C.
Phone (703) 417-8000
www.metwashairports.com/national

**Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD)**
This airport is about 40 minutes from the center of Washington, D.C.
Phone (703) 572-2700
www.metwashairports.com/dulles

Buses (Intercity)

**Greyhound**
The largest Greyhound Bus station in the city is only 5 blocks away from BLS. For more information, visit www.greyhound.com.

**Peter Pan**
The Peter Pan Bus line leaves from the Greyhound station (on First Street N.E.) www.peterpanbus.com.

**Chinatown Buses**
Chinatown buses are an option for Washington, D.C.-area residents to travel to other major East Coast cities. They depart from different areas in Chinatown (Gallery Place-Chinatown Metro stop) and drop passengers off in Chinatowns in the destination city. Rates are affordable. Some Chinatown bus providers include:

**Apex**
www.apexbus.com

**New Century**
www.2000coach.com

**Today Bus**
www.today-bus.com
**Amtrak**

The main Amtrak station serving the D.C. area, Union Station, is across the street from BLS. Tickets for Amtrak can be purchased at Union Station, by phone by calling 1 (800) USA-RAIL, or online at www.amtrak.com.

**Short-term Car Rental/Car Sharing**

In addition to traditional car rental agencies (e.g. Enterprise, Avis, etc.) the Washington, D.C. area has a car-sharing rental company:

*ZipCar*

**www.zipcar.com**

This company is designed for people without cars in urban areas who may need one to go shopping, head to an event out in the suburbs, etc. ZipCar can be reserved for an hour or a couple of days. Most of these cars are near Metro stops.

If you are interested in a car-sharing rental, you can sign up online and receive a special card in the mail that will unlock the doors when you are ready to pick up your car. When you are ready to rent, you reserve the date, time, and pickup location that you would like. Gas and insurance are included with the rental.

**Taxis**

For fare information on D.C. taxis, visit:

**www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/specials/theguide/maps05/dc_taxi.html**

For a list of taxi services for D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, see:

**www.commuterpage.com/taxi.htm**

For D.C. Taxicab Commission, see:

**www.dctaxi.dc.gov**

**Conclusion**

We hope this guide proves to be of benefit to you as you get settled in the Washington, D.C. area. Most of all, we hope that you enjoy your work at BLS and that several years from now you can say you made the correct decision in choosing to work in the Nation's capital. **Congratulations on your new job!**
The 2009 revision of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) New Employee Guide was sponsored by Phil Rones, BLS Deputy Commissioner. Revisions were made by a team of BLS employees under the direction of Roberto Morales, Division of Local Area Unemployment Statistics, and included Mark Sauer, Division of Administrative Statistics and Labor Turnover and James Walker, Division of Labor Force Statistics, all from the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics; and Karen Shahpoori, Program Standards Group in the Office of Compensation and Working Conditions. We are especially thankful for the contributions made by Bill Parks (Office of Publications and Special Studies), Eleanor Smith (Office of Administration), and Bill Wiatrowski (Office of Compensation and Working Conditions), and greatly appreciate the graphic design of Bruce Boyd and the editorial services of Monica Gabor, both in the Office of Publications and Special Studies.