
Why GAO Did This Study

As part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Protective Service (FPS) is responsible for protecting federal employees and visitors in approximately 9,000 federal facilities owned or leased by the General Services Administration (GSA). FPS has a budget of approximately $1 billion and maintains approximately 1,200 full-time employees and about 13,000 contract security guards that help accomplish the agency’s facility protection mission.

This testimony is based on past reports and testimonies and discusses challenges FPS faces in carrying out its mission with regard to (1) risk management, (2) strategic human capital planning, (3) oversight of its contract guard program, and (4) ensuring that its fee-based funding structure is the appropriate mechanism for funding the agency. GAO also addresses the extent to which FPS has made progress in responding to these challenges.

What GAO Found

FPS continues to face challenges in carrying out its mission. Specifically:

- The absence of a risk management program hampers FPS’s ability to protect federal facilities. For many years, GAO has advocated the importance of a risk management approach. GAO reported in August 2010 that FPS does not use a comprehensive risk management approach that links threats and vulnerabilities to resource requirements. Instead, FPS uses a facility-by-facility approach which assumes that facilities with the same security level have the same risk regardless of their location.

- FPS faces longstanding challenges in managing its contract guard workforce. Weaknesses in FPS’s contract guard program hamper its ability to protect federal facilities. GAO reported in 2009 and 2010 that FPS cannot ensure that its contract guards have required training and certifications. FPS is in the process of addressing GAO recommendations. For example, FPS revised its x-ray and magnetometer training for its inspectors and guards.

- FPS has not reviewed its fee design or determined an appropriate funding mechanism. FPS increased its basic security fee four times in 6 years to try to cover costs, but has not reviewed its fees to develop an informed, deliberate design.

What GAO Recommends

DHS and FPS have generally concurred with GAO’s past recommendations. DHS and FPS have initiatives in process, for example, to address risk management, strategic human capital planning, and oversight of its contract guard program.

View GAO-11-813T or key components.
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