Welcome to Ballot Storage Best Practices!

Presented by Debbie M. Abrego and Tessa Rowland

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Who am I?

Hello! My name is Tessa Rowland and I am an Election Security Trainer with the Secretary of State's office. I have many years of county election experience in both large and small counties. I started working elections in Travis County in 2013, then moved to Burnet County in 2020, then started with the state in late 2021. I have experience in almost all parts of the elections process, and specialize in field support, acceptance testing for hardware and software, physical security of equipment/supplies, recruiting workers, working with county election officials, and of course, training. I'll try to make this subject fun! I love elections, and I love talking about them. Thank you for your time and attention!

Agenda

- Paper Ballot Handling and Storage
- What Type of Paper Are You Using?
- The Quirks
- Tips From ES&S
- Tips From Hart
- Securing Paper Ballots and Stock
- How Do We Do This?
- Post-Election Storage
- Example Of Label for Storage For Records Retention
- Short Term vs. Long Term
- Control YOUR Paper's Chain of Custody
- Prepare – RLA's Coming to YOUR County
- Livestream
- Storage Space
- Noticing a Trend

Paper Ballot Handling and Storage

- By September 1, 2026, all counties must convert to a voting system with an auditable paper trail. (SB 598)
  - This advisory goes into more detail about SB 598: https://www.sos.texas.gov/elections/laws/advisory2021-09.shtml

- Several methods of paper-based voting exist. Today's primary options include machine-marked paper (with a ballot marking device), hand-marked paper, and vote-by-mail.

- What does this mean? If you have a DRE system or your voting system does not have a voter verifiable paper trail, then you must change voting systems before the September 1, 2026 deadline.

What Type of Paper Are You Using?

- While most paper used for ballot by mail may be regular copy paper, in the field, many voting systems use thermal paper.

- Thermal paper is primarily used for voting systems that have a ballot marking device, and a ballot scanner at the polling locations during early voting and election day.

- Thermal paper is a popular choice due to the fact it does not use ink and is less likely to smear.

- While thermal paper is becoming an industry standard, there are some things you should know about it.

Conclusion

- Learn from experience and prepare strong processes.

- Sharing experiences and learning from each other will help improve the election process for all.

- Talk to the vendors while you are here at seminar. See what their recommendations are and establish a contact person for your region.

- Talk to county employees who have already converted to a paper-based system and share best practices.

- Remember, elections are ever-evolving, so stay up to date on new laws and embrace change!

QUESTIONS?

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