



Plan for Inclement Weather and Disasters in Texas Elections



**Texas Secretary of State
Elections Division**

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sos.texas.gov • votetexas.gov

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>iv</i>
INTRODUCTION TO INCLEMENT WEATHER AND DISASTER PLANNING	1
<i>Election Security Toolkit</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Risk Assessment</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Preparedness Measures</i>	<i>2</i>
Monitor Threats	2
Secure Alternate Locations	2
Identify Key Stakeholders	2
Develop A Communication Plan	2
P.A.C.E. System	3
Backup Data	3
<i>Activation Procedures</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Communication and Public Outreach</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Guidelines on Operational Procedures</i>	<i>5</i>
Candidate and Office Holders/Campaign Finance Filing Period	5
Public Logic and Accuracy Testing.....	5
Office Hours	5
Early Voting	5
Election Day	6
Notifying Voters of Closures	6
Emergency Ballots.....	7
Curbside Voters.....	7
Securing Ballots and Chain of Custody Forms.....	7
<i>Resuming Operations</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Train, Review, and Update</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>7</i>
APPENDIX A: COUNTY PLAN FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER AND DISASTERS	8
<i>Key Stakeholders Needed for Responsive Action</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Alternate Polling Places</i>	<i>13</i>
Location	14



Point of Contact 14

Contact Information 14

Precinct 14

***Emergency Planning Checklist* 15**

***Types of Disasters and/or Contingencies* 16**

***Preparedness Measures* 37**

***Version History* 39**

APPENDIX B: EMERGENCY BALLOT PROCEDURES 40



INTRODUCTION

The Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State has prepared this Plan for Inclement Weather and Disasters in Texas Elections. This guide serves as a supplement to the Continuity of Operations Plan, which is a part of the *Texas Election Security Toolkit*.

References are made to the appropriate sections in the Texas Election Code, unless otherwise indicated.

The Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State is open during the hours that the polls are open for voting on all uniform election dates. Answers to questions on election law and procedures may be obtained by calling the Elections Division toll-free at 800-252-VOTE or 512-463-5650.

Visit sos.texas.gov, as well as votetexas.gov, for additional election information.

The Office of the Secretary of State does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability in employment, or the provision of services.

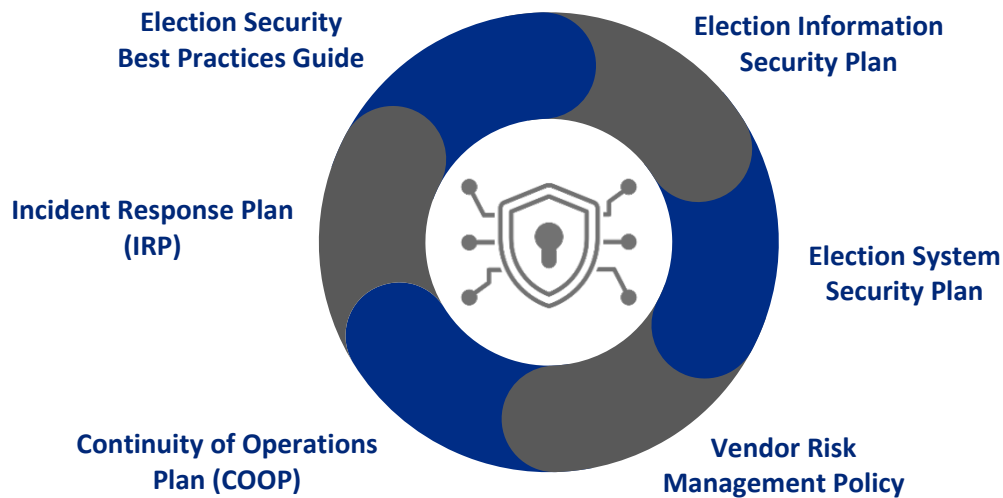


INTRODUCTION TO INCLEMENT WEATHER AND DISASTER PLANNING

The Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State has developed this supplement to the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and the Incident Response Plan (IRP) to ensure the seamless continuation of electoral processes across the state during inclement weather and disasters. This plan is designed to mitigate disruptions and maintain the integrity of the electoral system, aligning with the commitment to uphold the democratic process.

ELECTION SECURITY TOOLKIT

The Election Security Best Practices Guide, part of the *Texas Election Security Toolkit*, prescribes the creation of an Election Written Information Security Program (WISP). A WISP is a set of five documents establishing policies that protect elections from cyber threats as well as plans that keep elections running in the event of a cyberattack or disruption. The figure below highlights all six documents:



This supplement is intended to work with the existing COOP and IRP to more closely address the procedures and plans associated with natural and other disasters. To help conduct efficient elections, complete the *Texas Election Security Toolkit* templates so that formal plans are in place.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Identify risks associated with inclement weather, natural disasters, other disasters, and medical emergencies:

- **Inclement Weather**—Defined as weather conditions that are either unsafe or undesirable, including hurricanes; flooding and rain; tornadoes; and snow and ice events.
- **Natural Disasters**—Sudden or tragic events in nature that usually result in serious damage and loss of life. The risk of a natural disaster is not always detectable and reaction may be immediate. Evaluate the risks posed by earthquakes, wildfires, and dust storms.
- **Other Disasters**—Major communication or utility failures; bomb threats; active shooters; gas leaks and chemical explosions; and power outages.
- **Medical Emergencies**—Public health emergency or other individual emergencies.

Assess the vulnerabilities of election infrastructure, polling places, transportation systems, and communication networks considering all pertinent and identified risks. The Secretary of State will work closely with relevant agencies to address and mitigate vulnerabilities proactively.

This document provides guidelines to assist with the development of preparedness measures. Counties should tailor emergency plans to their specific needs. Specific vulnerabilities to polling places, roads, transportation systems, and other election infrastructure may vary based on geographical locations throughout the county. Local meteorological and emergency service agencies will monitor and assess these risks regularly.

PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

***Plans should be developed in advance and reviewed annually**

Monitor Threats

Establish a communication protocol to receive early warnings from relevant meteorological and emergency service agencies. Designate personnel to monitor local weather forecasts and disaster alerts. Schedule regular briefings to ensure a coordinated response and activation of any established COOP and IRP procedures.

Secure Alternate Locations

Identify and secure alternate locations for polling places and election offices that are less vulnerable to weather-related and other disruptions. Election officials should work with local authorities to designate and prepare alternate secure locations, ensuring accessibility and functionality.

Identify Key Stakeholders

Follow procedures from the adopted COOP and IRP for identifying individuals needed for responsive action. Know all points of contact for contracting entities, local media outlets, and emergency support personnel to assist with securing generators or other necessary supplies.

Develop A Communication Plan

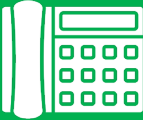



A clear communication plan should designate personnel responsible for relaying information frequently and identifying which channels will be used. Written emergency communication templates should be drafted prior to any changes in election-related events, polling places, voting hours, and public safety. The plan should include, but is not limited to, the following individuals and departments:

- Secretary of State
- Election personnel
 - County staff members
 - Deputy early voting clerks
 - Presiding and alternate judges
 - Election clerks, if possible
- All public communication channels
 - News media
 - County elections website
 - Social media
- Local authorities
 - County judge
 - County emergency management
 - Law enforcement
 - Contracting entities



P.A.C.E. System

To ensure continuity of operations, counties must develop backup plans for utilizing alternate communication services in the event that primary communication channels are lost or disrupted during an emergency.¹ Consider implementing the P.A.C.E. System:

<p>PRIMARY <i>everyday communication methods</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize standard communication tools (such as landlines or office phone systems). Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Functionality</i>—GETS provides priority access over landline systems for government services during emergencies. <i>Operation</i>—Users are provided with a virtual card and PIN to complete calls, ensuring prioritized service over public networks.
<p>ALTERNATE <i>backup methods and workarounds</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use cell phones as an alternative to landlines or other primary methods. Wireless Priority Service (WPS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Functionality</i>—WPS offers priority access over wireless networks, crucial for maintaining communication when networks are overloaded. <i>Operation</i>—Requires a subscription and can be added to existing phone services. FirstNet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated broadband network designed specifically for public safety agencies and their mission-critical communications. Consult with county emergency management, county judge, or sheriff for further details.
<p>CONTINGENCY <i>fallback methods</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ entirely different technologies like text messaging, email, social media, in-app notifications, web push notifications, real-time chat, voice over IP (VoIP), radio communication (such as CB radio, two-way radio, or HAM radio), and satellite communications.
<p>EMERGENCY <i>last resort</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider using non-technological methods (such as runners, emergency messengers, flags, or hand signals).

Backup Data

To protect the integrity and availability of voter registration databases and election management systems, it is critical to implement frequent county data backups and perform them routinely. Counties should consult IT professionals designated to assist with these processes. The Secretary of State has robust data backup protocols to safeguard critical election information at the state level.

ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

Clearly define events that trigger the activation of the adopted COOP based on weather forecasts, disaster declarations, and other relevant indicators. Follow guidelines provided in our advisories and other official communications for election operations during disasters.

¹ The list of alternate communication services is not exhaustive. Consult county emergency management and/or county judge for guidance.

Establish an incident command structure from the county's adopted IRP that designates roles and responsibilities for key personnel when the trigger event occurs. This structure will ensure a coordinated and efficient response to mitigate the impact of disruptions.



The Texas Election Code does not allow for any alteration to statutory deadlines in the event of inclement weather and disasters. The Secretary of State is not authorized to order closures but can provide general guidance depending on when the event occurs in the election timeline (such as during the candidate filing period or early voting period). Consult your county attorney if any changes will be made.

Generally, an entity cannot cancel an election without specific statutory authority. Listed below are two instances when an election may be cancelled:

- **Cancellation Due to Mootness**—Section 2.081(a) states that an authority may remove a measure from the ballot if the action to be authorized cannot be taken, or becomes moot, regardless of the election outcome.
- **Cancellation of a Bond Election Due to Disaster Declaration**—If the governor issues a disaster declaration within 90 days of a bond-measure election under Chapter 418 of the Government Code, regarding a natural disaster or other disaster threatening the health, safety, or general welfare of the authority's residents, the governing body may determine by majority vote that canceling the bond election is necessary due to damage to the authority's election system, to avoid harm to the authority's election workers, or to avoid harm to voters within the authority's jurisdiction under Section 2.081(a-1). If the governing body wants to cancel the election for any of these reasons, the governing body must hold an open meeting subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act. The meeting may be solely to deliberate whether to cancel the bond election. To the extent practicable, the governing body must provide reasonable notice of the public meeting and allow members of the public and the press to observe the meeting. The cancellation must occur no later than the 74th day before election day.

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

An internal communication plan is essential to timely convey information regarding election-related events, polling places, voting hours, and public safety during a disaster. Distribute the internal communication plan among personnel and conduct training exercises to familiarize themselves with who is responsible for:

- Communicating with the Secretary of State
- Updating all public communication channels
 - News media
 - County elections website
 - Social media
- Communicating with local authorities
 - County judge
 - County emergency management
 - Law enforcement
 - Contracting entities

Test the effectiveness of the plan by conducting simulations that verify roles and responsibilities are performed as planned.



GUIDELINES ON OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Every effort should be made to advise voters, candidates, elected officials, and other stakeholders of changes in the election schedule or locations of polling places. The act of changing polling places or the election schedule does not extend statutory deadlines in the Election Code, including the deadline for an Application for Ballot by Mail and the last day of the early voting period.

Ultimately, the most important priority is the safety of you, your staff, and your voters. While our office is not authorized to order polling place closures, we can provide general guidance for counties who may need to close or change the location of a polling place during an emergency situation.

Candidate and Office Holders/Campaign Finance Filing Period

Candidates and office holders should be notified of any office closures or changes in regular office hours. Notifications can be made by:

- Posting notices on the public website.
- Posting notices on the commissioners court bulletin board.
- Posting notices at exterior entrances to the building.
- Posting notices on social media.
 - Provide a link to the public website for official information.
- Updating voice messages on the office's phone system.
- Communicating with party chairs or other filing authorities.

Public Logic and Accuracy Testing

If rescheduling public logic and accuracy (L&A) testing, immediately notify the Secretary of State, testing board, and political party chairs. Publicly posted notices of L&A testing should be updated. Do not delay testing if an updated notice cannot be published in time. Notify all parties involved as soon as possible.

Office Hours

If the office is partially closed for safety reasons or minimally staffed, any employee in the office may take delivery of a document at the regular place of business or alternate location.

Early Voting

The Secretary of State should be immediately notified of any election changes. Notice of changes should also be posted to the county elections website. Additional notice requirements for changes of polling places after the order of election are outlined in Section 43.061.

Early Voting Polling Place Closure(s)

The Election Code does not provide specific procedures for emergency conditions for early voting. Persons in charge of public building access have the authority to close the building when potential physical danger to the public outweighs the uses for which the building would remain open. If a building is closed for its other uses during inclement weather, it is also closed for early voting. Alternate early voting locations should be activated as soon as possible.

Please remember to notify the Secretary of State as soon as possible regarding any changes to polling places, including polling place closures, so the information can be updated in the TEAM System. The TEAM Team can assist with these updates.



Inclement Weather Closures Do Not Extend Early Voting Days

A court order from a district judge is required to extend early voting days.

Authority for Extending Voting Hours

While voting days may not be extended, the hours of voting at the main early voting location may be extended in accordance with Sections 85.005 and 85.064. A court order is not generally required to extend the voting hours during early voting.

Election Day

The Secretary of State should be immediately notified of any election changes. Notice of changes should also be posted to the county elections website. Additional notice requirements for changes of polling places after the order of election are outlined in Section 43.061.

Election Day Polling Place Closure(s)

Persons in charge of public building access have the authority to close the building when potential physical danger to the public outweighs the uses for which the building would remain open. Alternate voting locations should be activated as soon as possible.

Remember to notify the Secretary of State as soon as possible regarding any changes to polling places, including polling place closures, so the information can be updated in the TEAM System. The TEAM Team can assist with these updates.

Shared District(s) With Other Counties

Counties sharing districts that appear on the ballot should communicate any changes in an election schedule with all other counties containing that district. Results for that district race should not be released until all associated counties have completed voting. This is particularly important if one or more counties have obtained a court order to extend voting hours past 7 p.m. Early voting results for that district should not be released until all voting in the district has concluded.

Notifying Voters of Closures

Every effort should be made to advise voters of any changes in an election schedule. Location closures should be included in the general announcement of a facility closure through all available forms of notice. Local media outlets should be notified of any election changes. Notices should be provided in all required languages to the extent possible.

Countywide Voting

Announcements should clearly identify which polling places are closed and which ones remain open. The Secretary of State should be notified immediately of any election changes.

Precinct Based Voting

Posted notices and announcements should clearly identify closed polling places and direct voters to where they should now vote. The Secretary of State should be notified immediately of any election changes.



Emergency Ballots

When inclement weather or unforeseen disasters threaten to disrupt the electoral process, emergency ballots may be utilized to ensure continued access to voting. The precise measures enacted will be tailored to the specific circumstances and magnitude of the emergency. See the Secretary of State advisory regarding [Emergency Ballot Procedures](#) for additional information. Instructions on preparing emergency ballots may be found in [Appendix B](#).

Curbside Voters

If available, rain gear may be provided for election workers who are working outside with curbside voters. Voting equipment should also be protected from the elements while providing curbside voting so that the equipment is not damaged.

Securing Ballots and Chain of Custody Forms

Every effort should be made to secure ballots (including provisional ballots), media containing electronic records of voted ballots, chain of custody forms, combination forms, and electronic poll books. These items should be stored in a secure location. Some counties have vaults where ballots and election records can be safely stored during an inclement weather event. If a polling place has to close early due to an emergency situation, polling place workers may need to take the electronic media and/or voted ballots with them to deliver to the general custodian if the location will not reopen.

RESUMING OPERATIONS

Evaluate the impact of the weather event or disaster on election activities and facilities. Create a plan to gradually resume election operations. When developing a plan, consider the following:

- Safety of all election personnel;
- Impact on polling places and the elections office;
- Status of infrastructure, utilities, and roadways;
- Use of priority telecom services for clear communication about the recovery plan; and
- Implementation of the recovery plan.

TRAIN, REVIEW, AND UPDATE

Conduct regular training programs for election officials and staff to ensure familiarity with emergency procedures. Practice simulation exercises to test the effectiveness of a plan and identify areas for improvement. Review and update all emergency planning templates to incorporate lessons learned from training, real-world events, changes in technology, and evolving risks. If the county wishes to plan for other types of disasters, please create a plan that best suits the needs of the county.

CONCLUSION

This document serves as a supplement to the COOP and IRP found within the *Texas Election Security Toolkit*. Developing emergency procedures can assist with disaster preparedness. The Secretary of State remains committed to supporting local election officials during times of crisis because public safety is the most important priority.

Email electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov with any questions or if you need help customizing this COOP supplement to your election organization and processes.



APPENDIX A: COUNTY PLAN FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER AND DISASTERS

Develop preparedness measures tailored to the county’s individual needs. Specific vulnerabilities to polling places, roads, transportation systems, and other election infrastructure may vary based on geographical locations throughout the county. Local meteorological and emergency services agencies will monitor and assess these risks regularly.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS NEEDED FOR RESPONSIVE ACTION

To ensure efficient communication and accountability during emergencies, maintain contact lists of key stakeholders, elections staff, and poll workers in multiple locations and designate a central point of contact to track all personnel. Refer to the COOP template within the *Texas Election Security Toolkit* for an Election Continuity of Operations Contact List and Early Voting and Election Day Worker Contact List. A more comprehensive list is found below.

County Department	Name	Contact Information
County Judge/ Senior Commissioner	<i>Name, County Judge</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
	<i>Name, Senior Commissioner</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
County Emergency Management		Cell: Office: Email:
Sheriff		Cell: Office: Email:
Commissioners Court	<i>Name, Precinct 1</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
	<i>Name, Precinct 2</i>	Cell: Office: Email:



County Department	Name	Contact Information
Commissioners Court	<i>Name, Precinct 3</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
	<i>Name, Precinct 4</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
Constables		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
District/County Attorney		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
IT Department		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:



County Department	Name	Contact Information
Maintenance Department		Cell: Office: Email:
Amateur Radio Operator (HAM)		Cell: Office: Email:
<i>Add information here</i>		Cell: Office: Email:
<i>Add information here</i>		Cell: Office: Email:

Emergency Services	Name	Contact Information
Local Law Enforcement		Cell: Office: Email:
Local Fire Department		Cell: Office: Email:
Local Utility Services		Cell: Office: Email:
Local Emergency Medical Services		Cell: Office: Email:
Priority Telecom Services		Cell: Office: Email:
<i>Add information here</i>		Cell: Office: Email:



Contracting Entities	Name	Contact Information
<i>Add information here (such as cities, school district, water district, or hospital district)</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:

Media Contacts	Name	Contact Information
<i>Add information here (such as news media, newspaper, or County Public Information Officer)</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:



Vendors	Name	Contact Information
<i>Add information here (such as voting system vendor, ePollbook vendor, ballot by mail vendor, or printing vendor)</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:

Polling Places Facility Contact	Name	Contact Information
<i>Add information here (such as school districts, cities, churches, grocery stores, or libraries)</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:



State Level Contacts	Name	Contact Information
Legal Team within Elections Division of the Texas Secretary of State		Office: 800-252-2216 <i>Option 1 – TEAM</i> <i>Option 2 – Legal</i> Email: elections@sos.texas.gov
<i>Add information here (such as Texas Department of Emergency Management or TXDOT)</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:
		Cell: Office: Email:

ALTERNATE POLLING PLACES

Create clear guidelines and prepare alternate polling places for unforeseen emergencies. This includes proactively contacting facilities to discuss accessibility during inclement weather, inquiring about the availability of generators, or other emergency services in case of power outages. Use the table below to identify alternate polling/office places secured for each election. Refer to the COOP template within the *Texas Election Security Toolkit* for the Alternate Utilities and Facilities Plan.

Location	Point of Contact	Contact Information	Precinct
Example City Public Library 1234 Main Street City, TX 12345	John Smith, City Facilities Director	Cell: (XXX) XXX-XXXX Office: (XXX) XXX-XXXX Email: john.smith@county.gov	101
<i>Add information here</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:	
		Cell: Office: Email:	



Location	Point of Contact	Contact Information	Precinct
<i>Add information here</i>	<i>Add information here</i>	Cell: Office: Email:	
		Cell: Office: Email:	
		Cell: Office: Email:	
		Cell: Office: Email:	
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		Cell: Office: Email:	




EMERGENCY PLANNING CHECKLIST

Take a proactive approach to inclement weather and disaster planning. Reacting after an event begins often leads to confusion, delayed responses, and potentially greater damage, highlighting the critical need for proactive planning.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish proactive assessment teams to evaluate polling place safety and functionality after severe weather events or disasters.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop robust remote work plans, including providing necessary equipment like laptops, monitors, and hotspots, so that election operations can continue when physical access to a workplace is limited.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain necessary supplies that include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Generators and fuel <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency lighting, flashlights, and batteries <input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguishers <input type="checkbox"/> Hand crank emergency radio <input type="checkbox"/> Two-way radios <input type="checkbox"/> Power banks <input type="checkbox"/> Extension cords <input type="checkbox"/> Cones and/or barricades <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency ballot kit <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency instructions for polling places
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain first aid kits that include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Tweezers <input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive tape <input type="checkbox"/> Gauze pads <input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive bandages <input type="checkbox"/> Roller bandage <input type="checkbox"/> Triangular bandages <input type="checkbox"/> Wound cleaning agent <input type="checkbox"/> Blanket <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Elastic wraps <input type="checkbox"/> Splint <input type="checkbox"/> Resuscitation bag, airway, or pocket mask <input type="checkbox"/> AED (automated external defibrillator)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain personal protective equipment that includes is but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Masks <input type="checkbox"/> Goggles/face shields <input type="checkbox"/> Body protection/gowns
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain emergency supply kits that include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning products <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitizing products <input type="checkbox"/> Disinfectants <input type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitizer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer training and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Basic first aid <input type="checkbox"/> CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) <input type="checkbox"/> AED <input type="checkbox"/> Stop the Bleed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test remote and VPN connections for staff to maintain access throughout the election.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fully charge equipment including electronic poll books and curbside voting equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct training exercises to remind and prepare employees about their roles and responsibilities.



TYPES OF DISASTERS AND/OR CONTINGENCIES

Inclement Weather	
 <p>Tropical Storm or Hurricane</p>	<p>A tropical storm or hurricane is dangerous and can cause major damage from storm surge, wind damage, rip currents, and flooding. They can happen along any U.S. coast or in any territory in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. In flat areas, storm surges may rush many miles inland. Hurricanes may also spawn deadly tornadoes.</p> <p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans for securing facilities during a tropical storm or hurricane. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages. Schedule frequent meetings to gather critical updates.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?○ What measures will be taken by the facility representatives to assess damages and report findings?• Discuss emergency plans to operate without electricity.• Election officials should closely monitor local forecasts and create a timeline for making critical decisions regarding closures and public safety based on landfall projections.• FEMA offers a hurricane hazard info sheet that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.• Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.• Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.• Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.• Consider redirecting phone lines to cell phones, answering services, VoIP, or other backup lines.• Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates to the county elections website and social media.• Protect, cover or relocate voting equipment, office computers, election management system, ePollbooks, and election records to elevated areas.• Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.• Turn off all non-critical devices and other non-essential electrical equipment. <p>During and After a Tropical Storm or Hurricane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. Public safety is the priority.

Inclement Weather



**Tropical Storm
or Hurricane**

- Avoid driving except in emergencies.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media about alternate routes which avoid low-lying roadways and flood hazards. Remember *Turn Around Don't Drown*®.
- Following a tropical storm or hurricane, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



**Flooding
or Rain**

Flooding is a temporary overflow of water onto land that is normally dry. Floods are the most common disaster in the United States. Failing to evacuate flooded areas or entering flood waters can lead to injury or death. Floods may:

- Result from rain, snow, coastal storms, storm surges, and overflows of dams and other water systems.
- Develop slowly or quickly. Flash floods can come with no warning.
- Cause outages, disrupt transportation, damage buildings, and create landslides.

Preparation

- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss known vulnerabilities during flooding or heavy rain. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages.
 - Do areas of the facility flood? What about parking areas?
 - Are roadways accessing the facility normally passable?
 - Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?
- Election officials should closely monitor local forecasts and road closures. Consider creating a timeline for making critical decisions regarding closures and public safety based on weather projections.
- FEMA offers a [flood hazard info sheet](#) that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
- Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.
- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.

Inclement Weather



**Flooding
or Rain**

- Consider redirecting phone lines to cell phones, answering services, VoIP, or other backup lines.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- Protect, cover, or relocate voting equipment, office computers, election management system, ePollbooks, and election records to elevated areas.
- Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.
- Turn off all non-critical devices and other non-essential electrical equipment.

During and After Flooding or Rain

- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- Avoid driving except in emergencies.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media about alternate routes which avoid low-lying roadways and flood hazards. Remember *Turn Around Don't Drown®*.
- Following heavy rain, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. Turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock if it is safe to do so.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



Tornado

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air that extend from a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes can destroy buildings, overturn cars, and create deadly flying debris. A tornado can:

- Happen anytime and anywhere.
- Bring intense winds, over 200 miles per hour.
- Cause extensive damage in a few seconds.

Preparation

- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans for securing facilities during a tornado. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages.
 - Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?

Inclement Weather



Tornado

- What measures will be taken by the facility representatives to assess damages and report findings?
- Discuss emergency plans to operate without electricity.
- Election officials should closely monitor local forecasts. Utilize tornado watches and warnings to trigger incident response plans.
- FEMA offers a [tornado hazard info sheet](#) that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
- Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.
- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.

During and After a Tornado

- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- If sheltering in place, move to a small, interior, windowless room or basement on the lowest level of a strong building.
- Cover your head or neck with your arms and put materials such as furniture or blankets around or on top of you.
- Ensure election equipment and election supplies are secured and stored in protected areas.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- Following a tornado, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Stay clear of fallen power lines or broken utility lines. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Snow or Ice Event

- Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion. Winter storms, including blizzards, can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds. A winter storm can:
- Last a few hours or several days.
 - Render heat, power, and communication services unusable.

Inclement Weather



Snow or Ice Event

- Put older adults, children, sick individuals, and pets at greater risk.

Preparation

- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans for securing facilities during a snow or ice event. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages. Schedule frequent meetings to gather critical updates.
- Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?
- What measures will be taken by the facility representatives to assess damages and report findings?
- Discuss emergency plans to operate without electricity.
- Election officials should closely monitor local forecasts and road closures.
- Request assistance from county and facility maintenance staff to salt heavy traffic areas and polling place access points.
- FEMA offers a [winter storm hazard info sheet](#) that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
- Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.
- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.
- Consider redirecting phone lines to cell phones, answering services, VoIP, or other backup lines.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates to the county elections website and social media.
- Consider supplying polling places with heaters.

During and After a Snow or Ice Event

- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media about alternate routes which avoid impassable and ice-covered roadways.
- Following a snow or ice event, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Natural Disasters



Wildfire

A wildfire, also known as a forest fire, or bushfire, is an unplanned and uncontrolled fire in an area of combustible vegetation. It's characterized by its potential to spread rapidly and cause significant damage, especially when fueled by dry conditions, strong winds, and the availability of flammable materials. Wildfires can devastate natural ecosystems, damage property, endanger lives, and release large amounts of smoke and ash into the atmosphere.

Preparation

- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans for securing facilities during a wildfire. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages. Schedule frequent meetings to gather critical updates.
 - Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?
 - What measures will be taken by the facility representatives to assess damages and report findings?
- Discuss emergency plans to operate without electricity.
- Election officials should closely monitor wildfire reports and create a timeline for making critical decisions regarding closures and public safety based on wildfire projections.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
- Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.
- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.
- Consider redirecting phone lines to cell phones, answering services, VoIP, or other backup lines.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates to the county elections website and social media.
- Protect, cover or relocate voting equipment, office computers, election management system, ePollbooks, and election records to safe areas.
- Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.
- Turn off all non-critical devices and other non-essential electrical equipment.

During and After a Wildfire

- Follow local evacuation and shelter-in-place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**

Natural Disasters



Wildfire

- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media about alternate routes that avoid wildfire hazards.
- Following a wildfire, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



Earthquake

An earthquake is a sudden, rapid shaking of the ground caused by the shifting of rocks deep underneath the earth’s surface. Earthquakes can cause fires, tsunamis, landslides, or avalanches. Typically, there are no warning signs.

Preparation

- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.
- Ensure election equipment and supplies are secured/stored in protected areas.
- Backup all systems and take a copy of the backed-up data with you.
- FEMA offers an [earthquake hazard info sheet](#) that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.

During and After an Earthquake

- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- If an earthquake happens, elections staff, poll workers, and voters should protect themselves right away.
- If in a vehicle, pull over and stop. Set the parking brake.
- If outdoors, stay outdoors away from buildings.
- If inside, shelter in place and do not run outside. Avoid all doorways.
- Expect aftershocks to follow the main shock of an earthquake.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates to the county elections website and social media. Remember to *Drop, Cover, and Hold On*.
- Following an earthquake, the assessment team or poll workers should evaluate the polling place, voting equipment, and supplies for damage. Promptly report any issues to the elections office.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



Natural Disasters



Dust Storm

A dust storm or blowing dust occurs when there are strong, dust-filled winds over an area that reduce visibility to one-fourth mile or less. These winds are typically 25 miles per hour or greater.

Preparation

- Typically, there are no warning signs for dust storms.
- Establish procedures for poll workers and county staff to verify they have safely arrived at the polling place or if it is safe to transport supplies to designated areas.
- Ensure election equipment and election supplies are secured and stored in protected areas.
- Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.

During and After a Dust Storm

- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- If a dust storm happens, elections staff, poll workers, and voters should protect themselves right away.
- If in a vehicle, be prepared for reduced visibility. Pull over, turn off lights, set the emergency brake, and take your foot off of the brake pedal. Try to stay off the roads.
- If voters are outside, bring them into the building and immediately close all doors and windows.
- Ensure election equipment and election supplies are secured and stored in protected areas.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media if strong winds cause downed trees making roads impassable.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Other Disasters

Major Communication or Utility Failure

A major communication or utility failure can cause disruptions to internet access, phone lines, and even cell service. This, in turn, can disrupt vital services like emergency response and transportation. Because of the interconnected nature of infrastructure, the failure of one system can quickly trigger failures to other systems.

Preparation

- Identify and prioritize essential business functions. Consider which operations must continue during an outage. These include:

Other Disasters



Major Communication or Utility Failure

- Life safety systems (such as emergency lighting, communication systems, or fire alarms)
- Critical data backups
- On-site security
- Find a secure cloud backup solution to keep information secure and accessible even during an outage.
- Implement remote access solutions so key elections staff can access critical systems remotely.
- Obtain reliable backup power sources (such as generators, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems, or portable generators) to limit downtime during an outage.
- Consider utilizing the P.A.C.E. System for communication in emergency situations.
- Schedule regular drills and maintenance checks to make sure backup systems are in working order.
- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer in the event of power outages.
 - Will the facility be used to assist with disaster response or recovery?
- Discuss plans to operate without electricity.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.
- Back up all data on servers and computers. Take a copy of the backed-up data with you.

During and After Major Communication or Utility Failures

- Quickly determine the extent and nature of the communications failure. Identify which systems are affected and prioritize them based on operational criticality.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media about the communications failure and ongoing measures.
- Re-route incoming communications to neighboring jurisdictions or secondary systems.
- Activate the P.A.C.E. System for alternate communication services.
- Ensure all personnel have been trained and know how to operate all back-up systems.
- Analyze the cause of the failure to prevent future occurrences.
- Identify vulnerabilities in the current system, and develop strategies to mitigate these risks.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Other Disasters



Bomb Threat

Due to the hazardous nature of explosive devices, every bomb threat must be taken seriously to ensure the safety of all personnel. Often there is no communicated threat and the danger presents itself as a suspicious or unattended package.

A **bomb threat** is a communication about the possible presence of an explosive device. Threats can be conveyed by various means including but not limited to verbal communication in person, by telephone, text, social networking sites, by email, or hand-written note. Knowingly making a false bomb threat is illegal and subject to various levels of prosecution.

Suspicious items are anything (such as a package or vehicle) reasonably believed to contain explosives, an IED, or other hazardous items that require a bomb technician to evaluate. Suspicious items might include packages with: no return address; excessive postage; stains; strange odor; strange sounds; unexpected delivery; poorly handwritten information; misspelled words; incorrect titles; foreign postage; and restrictive notes.

Unattended items are anything (such as a bag, package, or vehicle) of unknown origin and contents where there are no obvious signs of being suspicious. Facility search, lock-down, or evacuation is not necessary for unattended items unless the item is determined to be suspicious. Many people come and go from polling locations. *Practice vigilance.*

Preparation

- Typically, there are no warning signs for bomb threats, suspicious or unattended items.
- Consider creating a bomb threat emergency operations plan. CISA offers a [customizable template](#).
 - Method for reporting the emergency.
 - Evacuation policy and escape procedures.
 - Information concerning local area hospitals.
 - Availability of counseling services if there is an emergency.
- Conduct training exercises so elections staff and poll workers understand procedures.
- Create checklists or handouts that incorporate the following:
 - *Actionable Instructions*—Provide clear, concise guidance on how to respond to and document emergency situations.
 - *Key Contact Information*—Maintain a readily accessible directory of essential personnel and emergency agencies.
 - *Structured Threat Documentation*—Use a standardized format to record critical details, including the time and date, caller characteristics (voice and background noise), specific threat language, and the location of any suspicious items.

Other Disasters



Bomb Threat

During and After a Bomb Threat

If a bomb threat is received by phone:

- Keep the caller on the line for as long as possible. Do not hang up, even if the caller does.
- Listen carefully. Be polite and show interest.
- Try to keep the caller talking to learn more information.
- If possible, write a note to other elections staff or poll workers to call 9-1-1 or, as soon as the caller hangs up, immediately notify them yourself.
- If the phone has a display, copy the number and/or letters on the display screen.
- Write down as much detail as you can remember. Try to record exact words.
- Immediately upon termination of the call, do not hang up, but from a different phone, contact 9-1-1 immediately with information and await instructions.
- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- Ensure election equipment and election supplies are secured and stored in protected areas.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; and when appropriate, news media. If the event causes a disruption to voting, provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- If any polling places are impacted, activate procedures to designate alternate polling locations.

If a bomb threat is received by handwritten note or email:

- Contact 9-1-1 immediately with information and await instructions.
- Follow local evacuation and shelter in place protocols mandated by county emergency management. **Public safety is the priority.**
- Ensure election equipment and election supplies are secured and stored in protected areas.
- When speaking with law enforcement, provide as much detail about the threat as possible.
- If the threat is received in a handwritten note, handle it as little as possible to preserve any potential evidence (such as fingerprints).
- If the threat is received via email, do not delete the message or any related correspondence.
- Once the note or email has been read, secure it in a safe place and make sure it is available to law enforcement.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; and when appropriate, news media. If the event causes a disruption to voting, provide updates on the county elections website and social media.

Other Disasters

Bomb Threat

- If any polling places are impacted, activate procedures to designate alternate polling locations.



Active Shooter

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, active shooters use firearm(s) and have no pattern or method to their selection of victims, which creates an unpredictable and quickly evolving situation that can result in injury and/or loss of life. Other active shooter attack methods may also include bladed weapons, vehicles, and improvised explosive devices.

Preparation

- Consider creating an active shooter emergency action plan and response guide that includes:
 - Method for reporting the emergency.
 - Evacuation policy and escape procedures.
 - Information concerning area hospitals.
 - Availability of counseling services if there is an emergency.
- Conduct training exercises so elections staff and poll workers understand active shooter procedures. Additional trainings to consider include basic first aid, CPR, AED, and [Stop the Bleed](#).
- Plan ahead. Determine possible escape routes for facilities and know where exits are located.
- Update emergency contact information for all elections staff and poll workers.

During and After an Active Shooter Situation

- There may be more than one shooter.
- Contact 9-1-1 immediately with information and await instructions. Every second counts.
- Remember: **Run, Hide, Fight**.
 - **Run** to the nearest exit, making use of available concealment while moving away from the source of hazard. When fleeing, get as far away from the shooting scene as quickly and safely as possible. Do not take/carry anything with you.
 - If unable to safely evacuate, **Hide** in a secure area where access can be blocked or entryways can be locked.
 - Close the blinds; turn off the lights; remain silent; spread out away from other individuals; and turn off cell phones or put on mute and turn off vibration.
 - As a last resort, **Fight** or do whatever is necessary to survive the situation. As a group, plan what each person will do if an active shooter enters the room.
- When law enforcement arrives, be prepared for potentially loud commands. Keep hands visible and empty; follow all instructions calmly; avoid any sudden movements like pointing; and refrain from approaching law enforcement for assistance.

Other Disasters



Active Shooter

- Unfamiliar voices may be an active shooter trying to lure you from safety; do not respond to voice commands until you can verify that
- Law enforcement are trained to proceed immediately to the area where the shots were last heard. The first responding officers may be from different police agencies and dressed in different uniforms. They may even be in civilian clothes and wearing an external bulletproof vest.
- The first officers to arrive on scene will not stop to help the injured. Expect rescue teams to follow initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove the injured.
- If any polling places are impacted, activate procedures to designate alternate polling locations.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- After the active shooter is no longer a threat, election officials should engage in post-event assessments and activities that:
 - Account for all individuals at a designated facility to determine who, if anyone, is missing and potentially injured.
 - Assess the psychological state of individuals at the scene, and refer them to counseling, if needed.
 - Identify and fill any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the active shooter event.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



**Gas Leak,
Fluid Leak, or
Chemical Explosion**

Gas leaks can occur inside or outside of a building. The potential hazards of a leak are fire, explosion, carbon monoxide poisoning, and suffocation. If a gas leak is suspected, there may be a very unpleasant smell like that of rotten eggs. Mercaptan is a substance added to gas that emits a smell to let people know that a leak exists.

- If the smell of gas is faint, open windows/doors and evacuate the area.
- If the smell of gas is strong, evacuate the building using emergency evacuation procedures. Move upwind from any smell.

A **fluid leak** is the uncontrolled release of a fluid from its intended container or system. Leaks can occur due to wear and tear, corrosion, damage to pipes or containers, improper connections, or spills during handling. Examples of vehicle fluid leaks involve engine oil, gasoline, and antifreeze.

A **chemical explosion** is a rapid, uncontrolled reaction that generates a large amount of heat and gas, often causing a sudden and forceful expansion, which can result in damage and injury. Signs of a chemical release include difficulty breathing, eye irritation, loss of coordination, nausea or burning in the nose, throat, and lungs.



Other Disasters



**Gas Leak,
Fluid Leak, or
Chemical Explosion**

Preparation

Develop an emergency plan:

- Assess the types of chemicals, gases, and processes present in the elections office, warehouse(s), and polling places.
- Determine who to notify in case of an incident, including emergency services agencies and relevant personnel.
- Outline how to safely evacuate areas and designate specific assembly points.
- Assign individuals to specific tasks during an emergency (such as administering first aid or managing communications).
- Practice the emergency plan through regular drills to ensure everyone is familiar with their roles and procedures.
- Ensure all facilities are properly ventilated and equipped with functioning carbon monoxide detectors throughout.

During and After a Gas Leak, Fluid Leak, or Chemical Explosion

- Immediately alert elections staff, poll workers, and voters to evacuate the area if necessary. **Public safety is the priority.**
- If told not to evacuate or it is too late to evacuate, stay inside and minimize air flow by turning off air conditioners, fans, and heaters.
- Prevent access to the leak or spill area.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- If sheltering-in-place, reduce exposure to the chemical hazard by using duct tape and plastic sheeting to tape the gaps around doors and windows, cover any vents or recessed fans, and tape over electrical outlets.
- Record details of the leak or spill, including the type of chemical, the extent of the spill, and the actions taken.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- Stay informed about any changes to regulations or best practices.
- Conduct regular training sessions on chemical safety and emergency response procedures.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Preparation for Power Outages

A **power outage** is when the electrical power goes out unexpectedly. Outages can occur from a variety of situations (such as overwhelmed power systems **during extreme heat situations or natural disaster situations**). **Power outages present unique challenges when they occur in an office, warehouse(s), and polling places.**



Other Disasters



Preparation for Power Outages

Preparation:

- Meet with the facility managers for polling places and discuss plans for operation during a power outage. Inquire about generators or emergency services they can offer.
- Create and maintain an updated list of crucial connections, which should include the contacts for electric companies.
- Maintain an inventory of all equipment, noting which equipment needs extra attention during power outages to prevent damage, save energy and protect batteries.
- Determine which operations and equipment (such as computers, security or alarm systems, elevators, lighting, heating, ventilation, election equipment, or ePollbooks) would be impacted by a loss of power.
- Determine the impact of service disruption.
- Back up computer data frequently and store the information in a secure off-site location.
- Ensure that all electronic devices have surge protectors installed.
- Identify and obtain standby or backup power solutions to provide emergency power when the primary source fails.
- Proactively inquire about available backup power and ensure emergency lighting is available when securing polling locations.
- Obtain portable battery backups for essential communication devices like cell phones.
- Consider keeping a generator on hand to power necessary lighting, equipment and essential election functions.
- Maintain battery-operated light sources (such as flashlights or glow sticks). Avoid use of candles due to the risk of fire.
- Test backup battery systems, emergency lighting, phones, security and fire protection systems regularly.
- Establish a management plan for equipment when it is operating on battery power only.
- Manage the number of voters entering the voting site given the conditions that exist, as you cannot turn away voters.
- Conserve battery resources and power down some machines if there are no voters in line.
- Monitor battery resources as the event progresses and act accordingly.
- Activate plan to deploy backup equipment if an extended outage is expected.
- Conduct regular drills to ensure everyone knows their roles, responsibilities and procedures.
- Make plans regarding the following:
 - The likelihood of voters being present if a power outage situation occurs.

Other Disasters	
<p>Preparation for Power Outages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Election workers and voters with disabilities or special needs who may require assistance if evacuation is needed. ○ Review and revise plan regularly. ● FEMA offers a power outage hazard info sheet that can be shared with elections staff and poll workers.
 <p>Power Outages at Main Election Office</p>	<p>During and After a Power Outage at the Main Election Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contact the utility company or facility manager with specific information and request an expedited restoration. Monitor outage maps for updates on area restorations. ● Activate plan for initializing a generator to power critical election communications. ● Secure access points. Lock exterior doors to the building and request assistance from law enforcement for regulating the public entrances and exits. ● Temporarily post notice of power outage on exterior doors advising the voters to call for assistance if they are there to participate in any voting processes. ● Consider how outages may affect phone systems and be sure to provide a working number. ● Advise election workers about emergency communications with the elections office until power is restored. ● Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media. ● County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.
 <p>Power Outages at One or More Polling Places</p>	<p>During and After a Power Outage at One or More Polling Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post notice of polling places experiencing power outages on public website and advise voters of other options. ○ Post notice if voting has moved to another location. ○ Advise voters that wait times may increase. ● Activate the plan for deploying generators to polling places that are without backup services. ● Advise election workers to activate backup procedures and management plan. ● Election workers should activate backup procedures and management plan for qualifying voters during power outages, if an electronic pollbook is not operating:

Other Disasters



Power Outages at One or More Polling Places

- Regular voter qualification procedures are still required; voters must show photo ID or show a supporting form of ID and execute a Reasonable Impediment Declaration (RID);
- See [Emergency Ballot Procedures](#).
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- Assign an election worker to stand outside the polling location to advise voters of the power outage and offer alternate voting options.
 - *Countywide Polling Place Program*—Election workers may direct voters to nearby polling places that still have power.
 - *Precinct Based Voting*—Implement emergency ballot procedures if battery resources have failed.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.



Power Outages at Central Counting Station

During and After a Power Outage at Central Counting Station

- The election official should contact the utility company or facility manager with specific information and request an expedited restoration. Monitor outage maps for updates on area restorations.
- Activate plan for initializing a generator to power critical ballot counting functions and election communications.
- Secure all access points by locking exterior doors and request assistance from law enforcement to manage public entry and exit.
- Temporarily post notice of power outage on exterior doors advising the public to call for assistance if they are there to participate in the election processes.
- Consider how outages may affect phone systems and be sure to provide a working number.
- Advise election workers about emergency communications with the elections office until power is restored, if applicable.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities; the Secretary of State; news media; and provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- If power cannot be restored in a timely fashion, notify the Secretary of State and ask for guidance for continuing the counting process.
- Contact media and provide an alternate plan for reporting unofficial results on election night.
- Report election returns to the Secretary of State by phone, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan’s effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Medical Emergencies



Public Health Emergency or Other Individual Emergencies

A **public health emergency** signifies a critical situation, defined as an event or impending threat of illness or a health condition stemming from bioterrorism, epidemic, pandemic diseases, or infectious agents/biological toxins. These occurrences pose a considerable risk to human health, potentially leading to a significant number of fatalities or long-term disabilities. While a public health emergency encompasses large-scale threats, an **individual emergency** arises when a person requires immediate medical attention to preserve his or her life. Includes medical events (such as heart attack, stroke, or diabetic shock), accidents/injuries, heat stroke/exhaustion, and mental health crises.

Remember, you cannot impose additional requirements to access the voting process that do not exist in the law (such as temperature checks or mask requirements).

Election officials should coordinate with county emergency management, Texas Division of Emergency Management, or [regional coordinator](#). Creating a partnership enables election officials to remain informed about any public health crises that are announced by the governor or a county judge or commissioners court, which will help put in place the necessary safety precautions and backup plans to safeguard election employees, poll workers and voters.

Preparation

- County officials should coordinate with county emergency management and/or county judge to develop emergency response plans for individual and public health emergencies.
- These plans should identify potential risks, establish clear communication protocols, ensure adequate resources (including PPE) and training for all personnel for public health or individual emergencies. Additional trainings to consider include basic first aid, CPR, AED, and [Stop the Bleed](#).
- Emergency Response Plans should include different scenarios, including:
 - *Communication*—Procedures for alerting staff, poll workers, and authorities, including the distribution of emergency contact lists to all operational sites (offices, warehouses, and polling places).
 - *Evacuation*—Defined protocols for safe, orderly building exits and assembly.
 - *Medical Support*—Access to first aid kits, trained responders, and emergency medical services (EMS).
 - *Business Continuity*—Strategic planning to minimize operational downtime and during and after an incident.
- Recruit extra election workers in case of an emergency.
- Prepare [Emergency Kits](#).

Medical Emergencies



Public Health Emergency or Other Individual Emergencies

- Ensure there are an adequate amount of supplies for a possible influx of Applications for Ballot by Mail.
- Consider finding alternate polling places that allow more room for distance between people.

During and After Public Health Emergencies

- Activate Emergency Response Plans.
- Election officials should maintain frequent communication with local authorities, the Secretary of State, and news media, as well as provide updates on the county elections website and social media.
- Do not use a facility that is unsafe. Activate procedures to designate an alternate polling location, if necessary.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

During and After Individual Emergencies

- Activate Individual Emergency Response Plans
- Communicate with 9-1-1.
- Be prepared to render aid using items within first aid and emergency supply kits.
- Frequently communicate with election officials.
- County officials should assess the plan's effectiveness and make any necessary updates.

Office Closures Due to Public Safety or Changes In Regular Office Hours at Any Point in the Election Cycle

If the office is partially closed for safety reasons or minimally staffed, any employee of the office may take delivery of a document at the regular place of business or an alternate location. If employees cannot access the office, activate the remote access plan to maintain election processes (such as voter qualification or critical communications).

Immediately notify by phone and email:





- Secretary of State;
- Political party chairs; and
- County judge.

Post notice of office closure to the public website and provide frequent updates. Send notice of office closure to local media outlets and request assistance with public notification through press releases.

Coordinate a plan with county emergency management and/or county judge for safely resuming operations at the office.

Rescheduling or Relocating Statutorily Required Events Due to Office Closures

Note: Changes in the election schedule do not extend statutory deadlines set forth in the Texas Election Code.

 <p style="text-align: center;">Public Logic and Accuracy Testing</p>	<p>Immediately notify by phone and email:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of State; • Members of the testing board; and • Political party chairs. <p>Notify the public, candidates, and other key stakeholders of changes by posting notice on public website.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Do not further delay testing if an updated notice cannot be posted.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Meeting of the Early Voting Ballot Board</p>	<p>Immediately notify all members of the EVBB and post notice of any changes.</p> <p>If the board cannot safely meet by the ninth day before election day as required by law, call the Secretary of State for guidance.</p> <p>Communicate with the EVBB to notify them of the time board functions will resume.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Signature Verification Committee</p>	<p>Immediately notify all members of the SVC.</p> <p>Communicate with the SVC to notify them of the time committee functions will resume.</p>
<h3>Polling Location Closures or Changes in Voting Hours</h3>	
 <p style="text-align: center;">Early Voting</p>	<p><i>Note:</i> If a building is closed for other uses during inclement weather or disaster, it is also closed for early voting. Inclement weather and disaster closures DO NOT extend early voting days.</p> <p>A court order is not required to extend the voting hours at the main location. Early voting hours at the main early voting location may be extended in accordance with Section 85.005.</p> <p>Should relocation be necessary, activate a plan to relocate voting to an emergency backup location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify the facility and arrange access. • Deploy election equipment and supplies.

Polling Location Closures or Changes in Voting Hours



Early Voting

- Notify election workers of the change and advise them of any additional procedural changes.

Please remember to notify the Secretary of State as soon as possible regarding any changes to polling places, including polling place closures, so the information can be updated in the TEAM System. The TEAM Team can assist with these updates.

Closing an early voting location due to public safety is permissible if other early voting locations are still operating. Post notice of polling location closure and relocation details on the exterior door of the closed site. Immediately post notice of changes on the public website. Clearly identify which polling location(s) are closed and which ones remain open.

Immediately notify by phone and email:

- Secretary of State;
- Contracting political subdivisions;
- Political party chairs; and
- County judge.

Best Practice: Send notice of election changes to local media outlets and request assistance with public notification through press releases.



Election Day

Note: If a building is closed for other uses during inclement weather or disaster, it is also closed for election day. Consult the county attorney if a court ordered extension of voting hours is requested due to late opening or disruptions in voting.

Consider relocating a non-functional polling location to an alternate one nearby. Secure and move all balloting materials, electronic poll books, election paperwork, and any other items necessary to conduct the election.

Immediately notify by phone and email:

- Secretary of State;
- Contracting political subdivisions;
- Political party chairs; and
- County judge.

Please remember to notify the Secretary of State as soon as possible regarding any changes to polling places, including polling place closures, so the information can be updated in the TEAM System. The TEAM Team can assist with these updates.

Post notice of polling location closure and relocation details on the exterior door of the closed site. Immediately post notice of changes to the public website. Clearly identify which polling location(s) are closed and which ones remain open.

Polling Location Closures or Changes in Voting Hours



Election Day

- *Countywide Polling Place Program*—Direct voters to other polling places to prevent having to obtain a court order extending voting hours.
- *Precinct Based Voting*—If voting is temporarily unavailable while a polling location is moved, a court order may be sought to extend voting hours.

Best Practice: Send notice of election changes to local media outlets and request assistance with public notification through press releases.

If sharing district(s) with another county, communicate any changes that extend voting hours past 7 p.m. with all other counties containing a common district.

Results for common districts should not be released until all associated counties have completed voting. Early voting results for common districts should not be released until all voting in common districts has concluded.

PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

Refer to the COOP template within the *Texas Election Security Toolkit* for the Responsibility Succession Plan and Job Responsibilities and Tasks Guide. To ensure operational readiness, all personnel must understand their specific roles during an emergency. Use the table below to identify primary communication channels and the personnel designated to monitor them.

Communication Channels <small>(such as emergency notification apps, news stations, radio stations, advisory groups, or social media groups)</small>	Personnel Responsible

Communication Channels (such as emergency notification apps, news stations, radio stations, advisory groups, or social media groups)	Personnel Responsible



VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Reviewer(s)	Revision Summary
Example 1.0	Mar. 1, 2026	John Smith	Updated specific events for snow and ice events for election day



APPENDIX B: EMERGENCY BALLOT PROCEDURES

The Secretary of State's [Emergency Ballot Procedures Advisory](#) addresses the proper and timely handling of emergency ballots. The presiding judge should immediately contact the elections office prior to implementing emergency ballot procedures. This proactive step ensures proper oversight and accountability in unusual voting circumstances.

Supplies to Include in Secure Container

- Instructions to activate emergency ballot procedures
- Copy of the most recent Secretary of State [Emergency Ballot Procedures Advisory](#)
- Pre-printed emergency ballots and/or sample ballots
- Paper copy of Official List of Registered Voters (OLRV)
- Paper copies of all forms that are integrated into the ePollbook
- Combination Forms
- Poll List and Signature Roster (if not using Combination Forms)
- Emergency Paper Ballot Log
- Pens and "Voted" stamps
- Emergency ballot box or bag in case the tabulator is not functional

Instructions



**ePollbook on
Battery Power**

1. Follow the required steps in the ePollbook to qualify a voter.
2. Find the ballot style as noted in the ePollbook. If the ballot style is not included, poll workers must contact the elections office to obtain the appropriate ballot style for the voter.
3. Prepare the ballot as instructed by the elections office.
4. The elections office will provide the range of ballot numbers if the emergency ballots are not pre-numbered.
5. Prior to the ballot being issued to the voter:
 - *Early Voting*—The deputy early voting clerk must number and stamp the initials of the early voting clerk on the back of the ballot.
 - *Election Day*—The presiding judge must number and sign or stamp his or her signature on the back of the ballot.
6. Find and complete the applicable [Register of Official Ballots](#) to log emergency ballots. There is not a space for this purpose, but include emergency ballots in the totals using the Emergency Ballot Log.
7. If a sample ballot is used, the early voting clerk/presiding judge must mark an "X" through any race for which the voter is not eligible.
8. Poll workers must instruct voters that they can only vote in races where an "X" is not present.
9. Poll workers will provide the ballot to the voter.
10. Voter will go to the voting booth to mark ballot selections privately.
11. Voter will deposit voted ballot in the required secure ballot box or bag.

Instructions



**Using
Combination Form
or ePollbook is
Not in Service**

1. Request the voter's approved photo ID.
2. Find the voter's name and ballot style in the Official List of Registered Voters (OLRV). If the county does not provide the OLRV in a paper list format, poll workers must contact the elections office to obtain the appropriate ballot style for the voter.
 - Stamp "VOTED" on the line with the voter's name on the paper list of OLRV.
 - In primary elections, replace the "VOTED" stamp with stamps for the voter's party selection.
3. Handwrite the required voter information on the Combination Form: Name, Address, VUID, Precinct, and Ballot Style.
 - Place a checkmark in the appropriate boxes, if applicable, for Not on List, Provisional, Similar Name, or Reasonable Impediment Declaration.
4. Instruct the voter to sign the Combination Form and, if applicable, initial the appropriate boxes.
5. If using the Poll List and Signature Roster separately, please have the voter complete the necessary information.
6. The elections office will provide the range of ballot numbers if the emergency ballots are not pre-numbered.
7. Prior to the ballot being issued to the voter:
 - *Early Voting*—The deputy early voting clerk must number and stamp the initials of the early voting clerk on the back of the ballot.
 - *Election Day*—The presiding judge must number and sign or stamp his or her signature on the back of the ballot.
8. Find and complete the applicable [Register of Official Ballots](#) to log emergency ballots. There is not a space for this purpose, but include emergency ballots in the totals using the Emergency Ballot Log.
9. If a sample ballot is used, the deputy early voting clerk/presiding judge must mark an "X" through any race for which the voter is not eligible.
10. Poll workers must instruct voters that they can only vote in races where an "X" is not present.
11. Poll workers will provide the ballot to the voter.
12. Voter will go to the voting booth to mark ballot selections privately.
13. Voter will deposit voted ballot in the required secure ballot box or bag.

Note: Follow the county's procedures for provisional voting if the emergency ballot is a provisional ballot.