



Texas Secretary of State  
ELECTIONS DIVISION



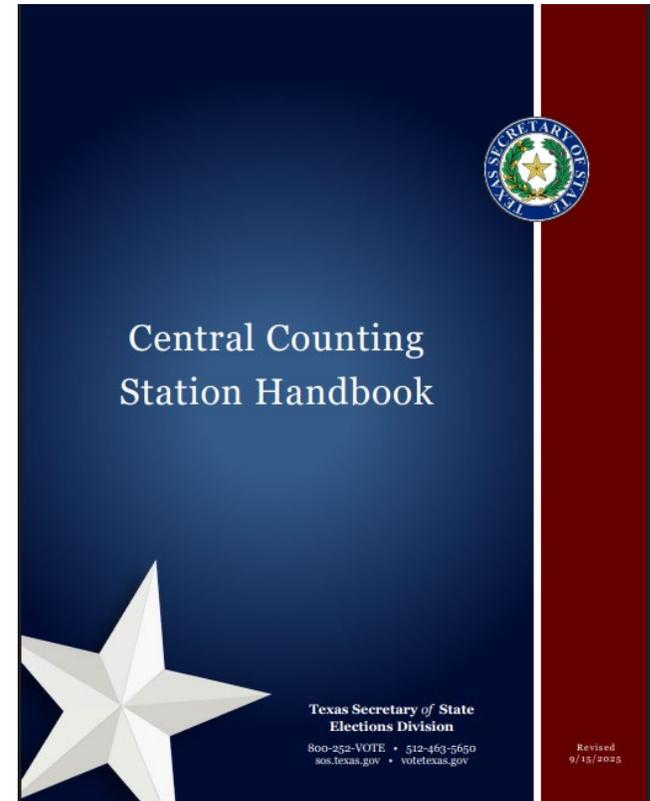
# Central Counting Station

Webinar  
*2/19/26*



## Resources

- We have an updated 2025 Central Count Handbook available on our website at
- <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/central-counting-station-handbook.pdf>





# Agenda

- What is a Central Counting Station?
- Central Counting Station Personnel
- Testing Requirements for CCS
- Central Counting Station Procedures
- Designing a Central Counting Station Plan



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# What is a Central Counting Station?



# What is a Central Counting Station?

A central counting station (CCS) is the place on election night where ballots are counted, vote totals are accumulated, and the unofficial elections results are generated.

Can establish more than 1 CCS (substations)

Sometimes referred to as a “central accumulation station.”



# Do I Need a Central Counting Station?

## You need a CCS if:

- You generate your results by reading media into a central computer
- You bring your election day ballots from your polling locations to a central location and read them into a scanner

## You do not need a CCS if:

- You hand-count your ballots in your polling places
- You generate your results by printing tapes from your equipment in the polling place and adding those totals up by hand/calculator

If you're not sure, just ask!



# Establishing a Central Counting Station

Type of Election	Authority Establishing CCS/Appointing Personnel	Texas Election Code
General Election for State and County Officers	Commissioners Court	123.001(b)(1)
Election Ordered by Governor or County	Commissioners Court	123.001(b)(3)(A)
Primary Election (Joint Primary)	County Election Officer	172.126(f)
Primary Election (Separate Primary)	County Executive Committee of a Political Party	123.001(b)(2)
Election Ordered by Political Subdivision (Non-County)	Governing Body of Political Subdivision	123.001(b)(3)(B)



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# Central Counting Station Personnel



# CCS Personnel Mandatory Appointments

- Central Counting Station Manager
  - In charge of the overall administration of the CCS and the general supervision of personnel
- Tabulation Supervisor
  - Responsible for the operation of the tabulating equipment at CCS
- Presiding Judge
  - Responsible for maintaining order at CCS, resolving voter intent questions, and signing off on precinct returns and reconciliation form
  - For joint primary elections, co-judges are appointed from each party's list
- Alternate Judge
  - Required for county elections, optional for political subdivision elections
  - Serves as presiding judge if presiding judge is unavailable, otherwise will serve in another role at CCS if presiding judge is available



# CCS Personnel Optional Appointments

- Assistants to Tabulation Supervisor
  - Assists the tabulation supervisor and performs other duties as directed by the tabulation supervisor. Is appointed by tabulation supervisor.
- Counting Station Clerks
  - Appointed by presiding judge, alternate presiding judge, or manager
  - Performs duties as directed by appointing authority (PJ, AJ, or Manager)
  - For joint primary, clerks are appointed in an equal number from each party's list
- County Chair
  - Authorized to be present in CCS for a **primary election** to observe the tabulation of results for the primary (Sec. 31.093(d))



# Who Makes Appointments to CCS?

- In general the authority establishing the central counting station is responsible for appointing the CCS Manager, the Tabulation Supervisor, the CCS Presiding Judge, and Alternate Judge (if there is one).
- So for the May Local 2026 election, the governing body of the local subdivision makes these appointments.
- For primaries, it depends on whether the primary is joint or separate.



## Who Appoints for Separate Primary Election?

Position	Appointer
Central Counting Station Manager	County Executive Committee (127.001, 127.002)
Tabulation Supervisor	County Executive Committee (127.001, 127.003)
Assistants to the Tabulation Supervisor	Tabulation Supervisor, with approval of County Executive Committee (127.004)
Presiding Judge of Central Count	<b>County Chair</b> (32.006 and 127.005(a))
Clerk of Central Counting Station	Central Counting Station Manager or Presiding Judge of Central Count (127.006)



## Who Appoints for Joint Primary?

Position	Appointer
Central Counting Station Manager	County Clerk/Elections Administrator (172.126)
Tabulation Supervisor	County Clerk/Elections Administrator (172.126)
Assistants to the Tabulation Supervisor	Tabulation Supervisor with approval of the County Clerk/Elections Administrator (172.126)
Presiding Judges of Central Count (Co-Judges)	County Clerk/Elections Administrator via "List Procedure" (172.126, 1 Texas Administrative Code Rule 81.148)
Clerk of Central Counting Station	County Clerk/Elections Administrator via "List Procedure" (172.126, 1 Texas Administrative Code Rule 81.148)



## Eligibility Requirements for CCS Personnel

	CCS Manager	Tabulation Supervisor	Assistant Tabulators	CCS Presiding Judge / Alt. Judge	CCS Clerks
Registered Voter of _____	Political subdivision of authority establishing CCS	Political subdivision of authority establishing CCS	No requirement	Political subdivision of authority adopting voting system	Political subdivision of authority adopting voting system
Registered Voter Unless...	Employee or first year of adoption of voting system	Employee	County with pop less than 60K = must be registered voter or employee	N/A	N/A
Can be employee of political subdivision?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, if no other legal or practical conflict
Can be candidate or officeholder?	Yes – if general custodian of election records	No	Yes, if no other legal or practical conflict	Yes – if general custodian of election records	No
Other requirements	Knowledge of voting system	Trained on voting system	Trained on voting system	None	None
Must meet other requirements of an election judge?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Must meet clerk requirements



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# Testing Requirements



## Senate Bill 2166

- Establishes testing deadlines for Public L&A Test and First Tabulation Test
- Clarifies tabulation testing procedures for precinct scanners and central counting station equipment



# Terminology Changes

## Test of Automatic Tabulating Equipment Used at a Polling Place

- Example: Precinct Scanners
- Tested once as part of Public L&A Test

## Test of Automatic Tabulating Equipment Used at a Central Counting Station

- Example: Central Scanners and Central Accumulator
- **Tested at least three times:**
  - Once as part of Public L&A Test
  - Immediately before **each time** that ballots are counted at the CCS
  - Immediately after **each time** that ballots are counted at the CCS



# Public L&A Test and First Tabulation Test

**Consists of three tests conducted together at the same time:**

- Public L&A Test
- Tabulation Test for Polling Place Equipment (Precinct Scanners)
- **Tabulation Test for CCS Equipment (Central Scanners + Central Accumulator)**

**All three tests are performed by the testing board:**

- Consists of at least two people appointed by general custodian
  - At least one from each political party
- Presiding and alternate judge of CCS **not** required to be part of testing board
  - However, they can be appointed by the general custodian



# Public L&A Test and First Tabulation Test

- Must be conducted no later than the 48th day before election day provide notice 48 hours before the test on the county/entity's website
  - Newspaper notice is **no longer** required
- If it is not possible to meet this deadline, must perform test as soon as practical and provide notice to SOS within 24 hours of the determination that the deadline will not be met
- The deadline for the May 2, 2026 General Election is Sunday, March 15, 2026.



# Second and Third Tabulation Tests

- SB 2166 codifies existing procedures for conducting these tests:

## Timing

Central Scanners and Central Accumulators must be tested immediately before and immediately after **each time** that ballots are counted at the CCS

## Responsibility

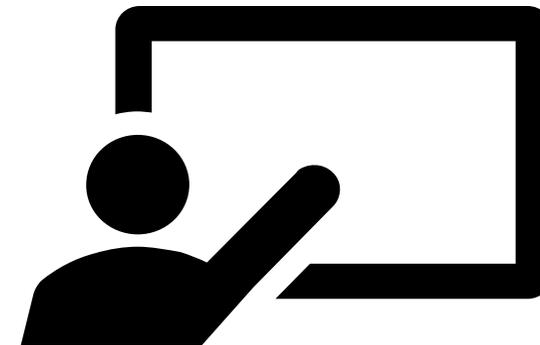
Presiding judge, tabulation supervisor, CCS manager, and programmer are responsible for performing these tests

## Materials

The electronic media generated during the Public L&A Test/First Tabulation Test is used to perform these tests at the CCS



# Resource Materials



**Prescribed SOS  
Training Material**

**Electronic Voting  
Systems Procedures  
Advisory**

**L&A Testing Guide**

**Central Counting  
Station Handbook**



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# Central Counting Station Procedures and Reporting



# Time for Convening

- Counties under 100K – CCS may not convene until polls open on election day
- Counties of 100K or more – CCS may convene after EV in person ends
  - Applies to elections ordered by the county or conducted jointly with the county
  - In these counties, CCS can convene and count, but may not release results until after the polls close on election day



# Convening CCS

- You must have your mandatory appointments present in order to convene your CCS:
  - CCS Manager
  - Tabulation Supervisor
  - Presiding Judge (or co-judges in joint primary elections)
  - Alternate Judge (county elections)
- Poll watchers are entitled to be present any time that the CCS convenes.



# Oaths and Identification

- Section 127.0015 - prescribes a specific required oath for all election officers appointed under Chapter 127
  - CCS Manager, Tabulation Supervisor, Assistants to Tabulation Supervisor
  - Presiding Judge and Alternate Judge
  - CCS Clerks
- Presiding and Alternate Judge will also need to take Constitutional Oath of Office and Statement of Officer
- Election officials in CCS must have nametag prescribed by SOS



# Security Requirements

- **Licensed Peace Officer at CCS**

- Must be posted to ensure security of ballot boxes when CCS is convened
- Applies to all counties and entities

- **Video Surveillance**

- Applies only to counties with a population of 100K or more
- Must establish a video recording system that captures all areas containing voted ballots from the time they are delivered to the CCS, EVBB, or SVC until the canvass of the election
- Recording must be livestreamed
- [Advisory 2022-10 – Ballot Security Requirements](#)



# Results and Adjudication

## • Results

- Must be reported by precinct
- Can be generated as a report from the voting system
- Precinct returns must be prepared and signed by presiding judge

## • Write-In Votes

- CCS Judge is responsible for adjudicating write-in votes through the voting system at the CCS
  - May be assisted by clerks, tabulation supervisor, and assistant tabulation supervisors in conducting the process, but CCS Judge should make the determination on assigning the write-in selection to a candidate based on voter intent
- Must be adjudicated and reported on election night



## Senate Bill 2217 (the part that wasn't repealed)

- Election Code 127.1302 requires a report of the total number of ballots scanned to each media drive by a central scanner to be generated at the CCS.
- Applies to the March 3, 2026 Primary and the May 2, 2026 General Election.



# Central Scanner Reports (Sec. 127.1302)

## Includes:

- Total ballots scanned on media drive
- Cannot include candidate/measure results if generated before opening of polls on Election Day

## One Report per Media Drive:

- Must be generated before media drive is read into central accumulator

## Generated by:

- Presiding Judge of central counting station
- Retain with other central counting station records



# Reconciliation

- **Reconciliation Form**

- CCS Judge must sign the written reconciliation of votes and voters
- Must be completed at the end of tabulation on election day
- Must complete a new reconciliation form on final canvassed totals after the CCS convenes to count late-arriving mail ballots and provisional ballots
- Must be posted on county website with election results



## Wrapping Up the CCS

- At the end of the night, you should have the following:
  - **Precinct Returns** (65.014, 127.131)
  - **Unofficial Results (Totals)** (66.056, 127.1311)
  - **Unofficial Reconciliation Form** (127.131(f))
- This means you should have at least **three** different documents prepared.
- **Precinct Returns** and the **Reconciliation Form** should be signed by the Presiding Judge.



## Poll Watchers

### • Observation

- Poll watchers may be present at any time the CCS convenes until the election officers complete their duties at the station.
- May observe any activity conducted at the location at which the watcher is serving.
  - Including activities that occur in the tabulation room
- May sit or stand near enough to see and hear the election officers conducting the observed activity.
- Class A misdemeanor to knowingly prevent a watcher from observing an activity they are entitled to observe.

### • Inspection of Records

- May inspect the returns and other records prepared by the election officers at the location at which the watcher is serving.
- May request a copy of an audit log from the central accumulator at certain intervals during the counting process. (TAC 81.62)



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# Developing a Central Counting Station Plan



# Central Counting Station Plan Requirements

- The manager must develop a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station
  - Must be made available to the public on request no later than 5 PM on the 5th day before election day
- The plan must address the process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots
  - Early Voting in Person: Compare # of early voters on early voting roster/combination form to the # of ballots cast.
  - Election Day: Compare # of voters on combination form to # of ballots cast. (127.007)
  - By Mail: Compare # of ballots entered on “Ballot Transmittal Form” from EVBB to number of ballots counted. (87.021, 87.1221)



# Central Counting Station Plan Design

- The Election Code does not outline specific requirements for what must be included in the CCS Plan (other than a reconciliation process)
- Two basic objectives for your central counting station plan:
  - Provide an outline of the basic setup and procedural process for how your central counting station will be run to act as a guide for your personnel at the CCS
  - Provide an explanation to the public (including poll watchers) about the process you'll follow for counting the ballots in their election
- Balance defined procedures against the need to be flexible
  - It is important to outline how you'll be conducting the process in detail
  - But also important to leave room for flexibility in case of changing circumstances
    - Can update your plan if circumstances change
    - Provide revision dates so that people know what the most recent version of your plan is



# Central Counting Station Plan Design

## Suggested Elements

- Purpose
- Location
- Key CCS Personnel
- Procedures for Convening
- Intake Procedures
- Security Procedures
- General Conduct Rules
- Poll Watcher Procedures
- Testing Procedures
- Duplication Procedures
- Adjudication/Resolving Voter Intent
- Tabulation Process
- Reconciliation
- Generating Results
- Reporting to SOS
- Any county-specific procedures



## Different Plans for Different Counties

- Different counties have different equipment configurations, or different procedures, or different needs
- There may be some elements in a template plan or another county's plan that works well for them, but doesn't fit your own practice
- Cater your plan to your county, your process, and your audience
- If a template plan or another county's plan is missing a piece that is crucial for your county's process, add it in!



# Available Support



**WEBINARS**



**TRAINING**



**RESOURCES**

[elections@sos.texas.gov](mailto:elections@sos.texas.gov)

800-252-VOTE • 512-463-5650

[sos.texas.gov](http://sos.texas.gov)