



# Assistant Chief Education Program – Election Day Emergency Procedures

04-Jul-2025

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your volume is turned up.**



# Emergency Procedures

- The good news is that real emergencies almost never come up on election day. The bad news is that “almost never” is not quite “never”.
- More good news is that most emergencies are easy to plan for.
- Some emergency procedures have been done for you already, some you have to plan for your particular polling place.



# Poll Pads Fail - slide 1 of 3

In this emergency, your Poll Pads fail to work. The reason they do not work does not matter – if they are unavailable this is what you have to do.

1. **Call the Registrar's office and let them know.** They may be able to help you get the Poll Pads working again, or they can dispatch someone who can fix your equipment or bring you replacement equipment.
2. Turn to the back of the Chief's Manual, where as of this writing in Appendix C can be found a 5 page set of instructions on Paper Pollbooks.
3. The Paper Pollbook Instructions are from the state, and date to 2016, so there are some slight differences in terminology and in some case the law has changed (you do not have to repeat the voter's address when you check them in, for example). Assuming you knew how to check in a voter with an electronic pollbook, you will know the law for doing it with paper – the law is the same.

## Poll Pads Fail - slide 2 of 3

4. In the materials the Chief picked up the day before the election is a paper pollbook. This listing is printed by first letter of the last name in 26 sections. It is easy to divide this in two and have last names for example beginning A-M go to one EO and N-Z got to the next.
5. Also in the materials for your polling place are voter check in cards. You will need to recycle these fairly often, as there is a limited supply of these cards. As each voter is checked in on the paper pollbook, give them a card and send them to the ballot table.
6. From the ballot table onward things proceed as normal.
7. Also in the materials the Chief collected is the Absentee voter list for the precinct, where you can see the status of voters who were issued an absentee ballot.



## Poll Pads Fail - slide 3 of 3

- Assume the Poll Pads will become available at some point later in the day. At that point, an EO can enter all of the voters into the Poll Pad who checked in on the paper system, using the paper pollbook as the record. It may be good to have two EOs working on this, one finding the paper pollbook entries and the other entering them – this can allow them to check the work – **BE CAREFUL!**. This will ensure no one accidentally or otherwise votes twice later in the day.
- Using paper pollbooks does not change the procedures elsewhere in the polling place, and it does not change the law. The same laws apply to paper and electronic pollbooks.



## Scanner Fails - slide 1 of 3

- In a very real sense, the scanner is the election. This is where the votes count. If your scanner fails for any reason and you cannot get it working again quickly, **CALL THE REGISTRAR**. The Registrar's office may be able to talk you through a fix, or may send someone to fix it or bring you a replacement machine.
- If the scanner fails, have voters place their ballots in the emergency ballot bin on the front panel of the scanner. Of course, it will have to be opened to permit this. Two EOs representing different parties should open the scanner to engage the emergency ballot bin, and this should be done in full view of any poll watchers.



## Scanner Fails - slide 2 of 3

- In almost all cases, at some point in the day the scanner will be working again or another scanner will be added.
  - If your original scanner is incapable of producing any reports of what it had counted, then after all voters have voted, note the public count on the working scanner and then you must scan the ballots in the emergency ballot bin AND the ballots in the regular ballot bin from the broken scanner.
  - If the original scanner is working again, then as before, two EOs, observed by poll watchers, will remove the ballots in the emergency ballot bin and run them through the scanner. Any ballots that do not scan will have to be manually counted (see below). This can be done at slow periods during the day or at the end of the day. The privacy and security of the ballots taken from the emergency ballot bin cannot be over stressed.
  - If your original scanner has been replaced, then any ballots it did not produce a results tape for should be counted in the new scanner.



# Scanner Fails - slide 3 of 3

- At the end of the day, you may have:
  - Ballots that have not been tabulated in a scanner, and/or
  - Multiple results tapes from different machines.
- Ballots that have not been tabulated in a scanner need to be hand counted. The Chief's manual has the complete "Virginia's Guide to Hand-Counting Ballots" in Appendix C. Use this guide.
- Teams of three EOs can be used to count ballots. In each team of 3, two of the EOs will be looking at (scrutinizing) the ballot and one EO will record the vote. The two scrutinizing EOs should represent different parties if practicable. They should follow the Virginia Guide and direct the recording EO how to record the vote and then check to make sure that it is recorded correctly. Take steps to ensure each ballot is counted once and only once.
- This process will take time. ALWAYS let the Registrar's office know if you have to hand count ballots.
- Multiple results tapes need to be attached to the SORs and Printed Return Sheet.
- All tabulation processes are subject to observation by Poll Watchers.



# Medical Emergencies

- With tens of thousands of voters and hundreds of EOs, there will be one or more medical emergencies on election day.
- EOs who are health care professionals in other circumstances are not serving in that capacity on Election Day except during an emergency.
- 911 should be called whenever there is a medical emergency, and those present should render what **first aid** they can provide until the 911 response arrives.
- Minor scratches that can be fixed up with the polling place first aid kit do not mandate a 911 call. Loss of consciousness, on the other hand, always does. Use your best judgment but err on the side of caution. We do not want a voter or an EO who had an emergency, but seemed to shake it off, experience further difficulty while driving home.



# Facility Emergencies - **slide 1 of 3**

- Facility emergencies include loss of power, fire, fire alarms, floods or anything else that renders the facility temporarily or permanently unsuitable for voting.
- A fire alarm sounding continuously in a facility, even if false, renders the facility unsuitable for voting – those things are LOUD.
- Your first priority is the safety of the EOs and voters, your second priority is the election -- respond accordingly.



## Facility Emergencies - **slide 2 of 3**

- There are three strategies for facility emergencies:
  - Do nothing – the emergency is transient or does not affect you. A flood from a broken pipe in an unused corner of the room where the election is being held that the custodian has under control would be an example of this.
  - Temporarily relocate – secure and move your pollbooks, ballots and scanner to another location (even outside if appropriate) and continue voting until you can return to the original location.
  - Relocate to another address and post notices for voters where to go to find you.



## Facility Emergencies - **slide 3 of 3**

- Always call the Registrar once you are safe if you have a facility emergency.
- If you have to relocate temporarily, you will want to have made a plan in advance for how and where that should be done for your location so that in an emergency, everyone knows what they are to do.
- If you have to relocate for the rest of the day, you must involve the Registrar's office to approve any such change.
- Note that if there is enough light to see in your polling place, the scanner and pollbooks can continue operating for some time on internal battery power, so short electrical outages may not be much of an inconvenience.



# Other Emergencies

- Meteors, earthquakes, protesters, humans behaving badly, hurricanes, tornadoes, road closures, deep snow, zombies – it is hard to foresee every possible emergency.
- You should consider your polling place location and what it has to offer. Is there another location within your polling place where you could relocate the voting if need be or take shelter in an emergency? How do you evacuate the polling place? If you have to act quickly on an emergency plan, who is responsible for what?
- Taking an hour to draft a short emergency plan with assignments for your polling place and communicating that to your team can provide folks with a lot of comfort – and could be vital if such an emergency comes to pass.
- An emergency plan for a polling place is likely to need little updating over time.
- An example plan is available from the Registrar's office.



# Afterword

- Events we do not expect will occur some of the time, life would be boring otherwise.
- Other than medical emergencies, most of these events become emergencies when we are unprepared for them.
- If we are prepared, they can be parts of the day where we get to move a little faster doing something unusual, but not in a panic.
- Make your emergencies things that become good stories because you had planned for them, not occasions where you were caught flat-footed.

