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ELECTIONS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

CORE Playbook

CONTINUITY & OPERATIONAL READINESS FOR ELECTIONS

A shared framework for coordination, continuity, and resilience across the full election cycle.

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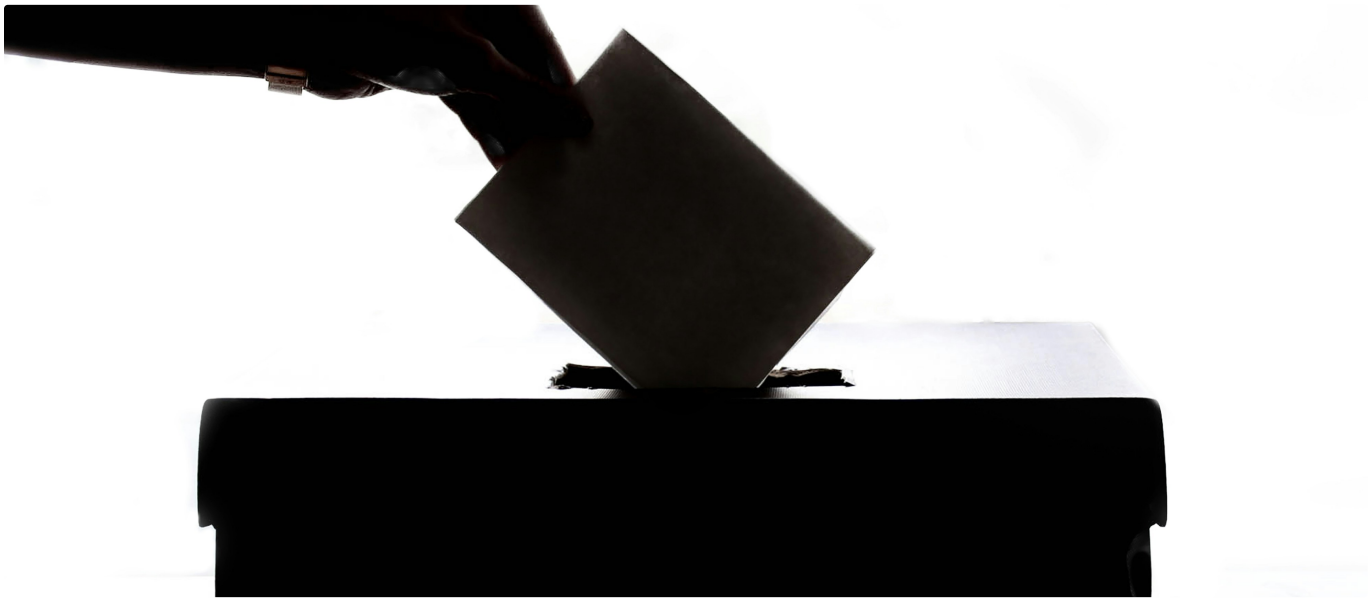

Every election depends on systems built long before the first ballot is cast.

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01 MODULE

Introduction

Elections are essential government functions that must continue under all conditions. They are time sensitive, foundational to public trust, and necessary for the continuity of government. In most cases, election days are fixed and cannot be moved under any circumstance, which makes preparing for all hazards that much more important. Ensuring elections proceed safely, securely, and without disruption requires clear, consistent, and proactive coordination between election officials and emergency management professionals. This **CORE (Continuity & Operational Readiness for Elections)** Playbook provides a unified framework to support that coordination.

This Playbook reinforces a fundamental principle: the relationship between elections and emergency management is not optional. Each discipline depends on the other to maintain the continuity of a critical government function, safeguard voting processes, ensure the availability of facilities and resources, and support the safety of the public and the workforce. Effective coordination requires shared planning, defined roles, established communication pathways, and routine joint exercises and information exchange.

Election environments today involve a wide range of potential disruptions. These may include natural hazards, infrastructure failures, technology outages, cybersecurity attacks, public safety incidents, and challenges within the broader information environment that affect public understanding or behavior. These conditions highlight the need for an all-hazards (yet risk-informed and individualized) approach that accounts for both common threats and the specific circumstances, geography, resources, and vulnerabilities of each jurisdiction.

This Playbook has four broad purposes that guide all sections and contributors.

1. Provide a shared framework that strengthens and formalizes the partnership between elections and emergency management professionals.
2. Offer guidance for collaborative planning that supports continuity, resilience, and timely decision-making before, during, and after each election cycle.
3. Supply tools, templates, checklists, and operational concepts that jurisdictions can use or adapt to enhance readiness and support a consistent approach to election preparedness.
4. Highlight gold-standard practices, scalable processes, and lessons learned that help jurisdictions of all sizes build and maintain resilient election operations.

This Playbook was developed through a collaborative, cross-disciplinary partnership between election officials, emergency management professionals, policy experts, and practitioners with substantial experience in election administration, emergency coordination, public safety, continuity programs, and community engagement. The co-authoring organizations appear at the top of this page, and their combined knowledge and experience ensure that this Playbook reflects real-world operational needs, proven practices, and strategic alignment between the elections and emergency management communities.

This Playbook is not tied to any specific jurisdiction, organizational structure, or election year, but it may include examples from those for illustrative purposes. It is designed for repeated use and long-term applicability and adaptability. It is a living document that will be updated through future versions as new practices emerge, operational needs evolve, and jurisdictions identify areas for improvement.

By using this Playbook, jurisdictions can strengthen their ability to plan, coordinate, and sustain election operations under a wide range of conditions, support voter access and safety, and maintain public confidence in the systems that enable democratic participation.

Recent elections have demonstrated that emergencies, disasters, and other disruptive incidents (such as utility outages/blips, climate control issues, internet outages, telephone failures, traffic issues, staffing shortages, technology malfunctions, etc.) can significantly affect election operations and require coordinated planning and response. During the 2024 election cycle, Hurricane Helene caused widespread damage across western North Carolina, resulting in damaged polling locations, voter displacement, infrastructure impacts, power outages, and the need for election officials to modify voting plans and relocate polling sites. Election officials worked alongside emergency management agencies and other partners to implement emergency measures that maintained access to voting despite extensive storm impacts (ABC News, 2024; Scientific American, 2024).[1] [2]

Similarly, on Election Day 2024, multiple bomb threats targeting polling locations in several states resulted in temporary evacuations, voting disruptions, and the extension of voting hours at affected polling sites. In Georgia, numerous polling locations received threats that required law enforcement response, operational adjustments, and coordination among election officials, public safety agencies, and government partners to ensure voting could continue safely (PBS News, 2024; Georgia Public Broadcasting, 2024).[3] [4] Power outages as a result of a construction project, flooding as a result of a water main break and any number of unanticipated interruptions can affect election operations.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Committee for Safe and Secure Elections

Incidents like these depend on election officials and law enforcement knowing one another before the call comes in. The Committee for Safe and Secure Elections (CSSE) has spent years building those relationships, bringing together election administrators and law enforcement officers to train together, run tabletop exercises and agree in advance on who does what when a polling place is threatened.

CSSE publishes quick reference guides covering the election-related provisions of each state's law, a framework for responding to bomb threats and site safety assessment checklists for election offices, polling places and drop box areas.

These events reinforce a broader lesson for jurisdictions nationwide: election operations depend upon facilities, personnel, communications systems, transportation networks, utilities, technology, and numerous external partners that may be affected by emergencies occurring before, during, or after an election. Whether the disruption is caused by severe weather, infrastructure failure, a public safety incident, cyber-related consequences, or another hazard, effective coordination between elections officials and emergency management professionals can help jurisdictions anticipate challenges, maintain continuity of operations, and support resilient election administration under changing conditions.

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02 MODULE

Assumptions and Principles

Plan for consequences, not causes. The hazard changes; the operational impact is what matters.

This Playbook is grounded in a concise set of assumptions and principles that reflect how elections and emergency management professionals must work together to ensure safe, secure, and uninterrupted election operations. These concepts are designed for broad application to jurisdictions of all sizes and form the foundation for how this Playbook is intended to be used.

Core Planning Assumptions

1. **Elections must continue under all conditions.**
   Elections are essential government functions with legally established timelines. Planning must assume that election operations will proceed even when hazards, disruptions, or resource limitations affect facilities, staffing, systems, or public behavior. Preparedness must account for operations continuing in degraded environments. Election preparedness should be informed by locally identified threats, hazards, and risks and aligned with existing emergency management risk assessment processes whenever possible.
2. **Elections are not just one day in November.**
   Election cycles are continuous throughout the year, encompassing primary, special, run-off, and general elections. Federal and state laws establish election calendars and deadlines that cannot be moved, and officials must understand these timelines and their potential consequences. This transparency is essential for aligning recovery plans and prioritizing operational continuity. (The Calendar and Timeline module addresses these deadlines in detail.)
3. **Jurisdictions have diverse resources, risks, and staffing levels.**
   Jurisdictions vary widely in staffing levels, operational capacity, geography, infrastructure, and available resources. This is true both in election administration and emergency management. Because of these differences, planning must be both scalable and tailored, using an all-hazards approach that is risk-informed and realistic for the jurisdiction's workforce, systems, and operational environment. Plans should be achievable regardless of team size or technical capability, and adaptable to each jurisdiction's unique risks and support structures.
4. **Cross-agency collaboration is essential to maintain election continuity.**
   Election officials and emergency management each hold different authorities, responsibilities, and operational perspectives. Effective continuity requires shared planning, consistent communication, coordinated decision-making, and established working relationships. Neither discipline can independently manage the full range of potential impacts on election operations.

5. **Disruptions may occur with little or no warning.**
   Weather, infrastructure failures, technology outages, public safety incidents, and inaccurate or conflicting information within the community can develop quickly. Jurisdictions must assume limited lead time and be prepared for rapid adjustments and predefined actions that maintain essential functions. This is why building the relationships and plans well in advance is imperative.

Guiding Principles

1. **Partnership is foundational.**
   Collaboration between election officials and emergency management should occur year-round through shared planning meetings, coordinated procedures, joint exercises, and aligned operational expectations.
2. **Continuity of essential functions guides preparedness.**
   Election operations must remain functional even when facilities, staffing, or systems are disrupted. Plans should identify essential tasks, define backup procedures, outline alternate locations or workflows, and establish clear triggers for activating continuity measures.
3. **Shared situational awareness strengthens coordinated action.**
   Maintaining a common operating picture requires consistent communication and timely information exchange. Representatives of both disciplines must understand emerging hazards, operational conditions, facility issues, and community-level factors that may influence the election environment. Similarly, the election environment can affect emergency preparedness and the emergency management realm because of the heightened threats, hazards, and risks that are fruitful during election cycles.
4. **Clear roles and predictable decision pathways reduce confusion.**
   Everyone involved must understand authorities, responsibilities, support functions, and communication channels. Predictable processes enable faster, more accurate decisions during both routine operations and disruptions.
5. **Operational accessibility and functional needs considerations must be part of planning.**
   Preparedness must account for how disruptions affect the ability of all eligible voters to access voting services. This includes functional needs related to accessible facilities, transportation, mobility, or language support. These are operational requirements that ensure continuity of service.
6. **Whole-community coordination strengthens resilience.**
   Election operations intersect with many partners, such as public safety, public health, transportation, facilities, utilities, and information technology services. Effective preparedness incorporates these partners into planning, communication, and coordination processes.

How This Playbook Should Be Used

1. **Use this Playbook as a living framework for your local planning.**
   Adapt the concepts, structures, and templates to build or refine your jurisdiction's own election preparedness, coordination, and continuity plans, and return to it regularly as guidance, practices, and operational environments evolve. Customize it to fit your operational realities, staffing levels, and hazards.

2. **Use this Playbook jointly across agencies.**
   Share and apply it collaboratively between election officials and emergency management partners. Use it to guide joint planning sessions, coordination structures, exercises, and operational readiness activities.
3. **Use this Playbook to support consistent and scalable preparedness and continuity.**
   Apply its guidance in ways that match your jurisdiction's capacity. Whether you operate with extensive resources or a small team, use the Playbook to identify practical and achievable steps that strengthen continuity and coordination.

03 MODULE

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Two professions, one mission: voters served safely, securely, and without interruption.

The purpose of this module is to help jurisdictions identify key stakeholders, understand their potential roles and responsibilities, establish expectations for collaboration, coordinate across agencies and levels of government, and ultimately support coordinated election preparedness efforts throughout the election cycle.

The organizations identified within this module represent common stakeholders that jurisdictions may consider involving in election preparedness activities. Because governance structures, authorities, operational environments, and available resources vary significantly across jurisdictions, this list should not be viewed as exhaustive or mandatory. Each jurisdiction should determine which organizations are appropriate to involve based on local needs, risks, and capabilities.

The Foundational Partnership: Election Officials and Emergency Management

The central premise of this Playbook is that effective election preparedness requires a deliberate, sustained, and collaborative partnership between election officials and emergency management professionals.

While election officials remain responsible for administering elections and emergency management organizations remain responsible for preparedness, coordination, continuity, consequence management, and incident coordination, neither organization independently possesses all of the capabilities necessary to address the broad range of hazards, threats, disruptions, and operational challenges that may affect election operations.

Election Officials	Emergency Management Professionals
Election administration	Preparedness
Election laws	Planning
Election operations	Continuity
Polling place management	Risk assessment
Ballot processing	Situational awareness
Election technology	Stakeholder coordination
Election workers	Resource management
Voter engagement	Training and exercises
Election-specific decision-making	Response and recovery operations
	Consequence management

These capabilities are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Together, these organizations should serve as the primary coordinators of election preparedness, continuity, response, and recovery activities, and should lead efforts to engage stakeholders, facilitate collaboration, and strengthen election resilience throughout the election cycle.

For this reason, jurisdictions are strongly encouraged to establish an intentional working relationship between the local election office and the local emergency management organization well in advance of Election Day. This relationship should serve as the foundation for election preparedness efforts throughout the entire election cycle. Together, election officials and emergency management professionals should:

- Identify and engage stakeholders.
- Establish preparedness priorities.
- Coordinate planning activities.
- Develop preparedness objectives.
- Establish coordination mechanisms.
- Facilitate preparedness coordination meetings.
- Share situational awareness information.
- Coordinate protective measures.
- Identify capability gaps and resource requirements.
- Develop continuity strategies.
- Coordinate resource support planning.
- Facilitate training and exercise activities.
- Coordinate incident response activities when necessary.
- Support recovery and continuity operations.
- Conduct after-action reviews and improvement planning.

> **Although many organizations may contribute to election preparedness, the partnership between election officials and emergency management professionals should serve as the central coordinating relationship through which preparedness, continuity, response, and recovery efforts are organized and sustained.**

Establishing the Partnership

For some jurisdictions, relationships between election officials and emergency management professionals may already be well established. For others, this Playbook may represent the first effort to build a formal election preparedness partnership.

Jurisdictions should not assume that election officials and emergency management professionals automatically know one another or have previously worked together. Establishing this relationship is often the first and most important step in building an effective election preparedness program.

FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS: IDENTIFYING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

Election officials seeking to establish a relationship with emergency management should begin by identifying the organization or individual responsible for emergency management within their jurisdiction. Emergency management organizational structures vary significantly across the United States. Depending on jurisdiction size, governance structure, and available resources, emergency management functions may be performed by:

- An Office of Emergency Management (OEM).
- A Department of Emergency Management.
- A Department of Homeland Security.
- An Office of Emergency Services.
- A Department of Public Safety.
- A Sheriff’s Office.
- A County Manager or Administrator’s Office.
- A Mayor’s Office.
- A state, county, tribal, territorial, or regional emergency management agency.

- A single emergency manager assigned within another government department or agency not identified in this list.

In larger jurisdictions, emergency management may be performed by a dedicated department consisting of multiple planners, coordinators, and emergency management professionals. In smaller jurisdictions, emergency management responsibilities may be assigned to a single individual who performs those duties alongside other responsibilities.

If an election official is uncertain who performs emergency management functions within their jurisdiction, they should contact local government leadership, public safety agencies, county administration, or state emergency management agencies for assistance identifying the appropriate point of contact.

FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS: IDENTIFYING ELECTION PARTNERS

Emergency management professionals seeking to establish a relationship with election officials should identify the organization or office responsible for election administration within their jurisdiction. Election administration structures vary across states and local jurisdictions. Depending on state law and local governance structures, election administration may be managed by:

- A Clerk and Recorder.
- A County Clerk.
- A City Clerk.
- A Municipal Clerk.
- A Registrar of Voters.
- A Board of Elections.
- An Elections Division.
- An Elections Department.
- A Secretary of State’s Office.
- Another designated election authority within a government department or agency not identified in this list.

Within these organizations, emergency management professionals should seek to establish relationships with individuals who possess operational responsibilities, decision-making authority, or preparedness responsibilities related to election operations. Potential points of contact may include: Election Directors, Election Administrators, Election Managers, Deputy Election Directors, Election Operations Managers, Election Security Managers, Election Preparedness Coordinators, Election Project Managers, Election Technology Managers, Election Facility Coordinators, senior elections officials, and elected clerks, recorders, registrars, or other election authorities.

Because organizational structures vary significantly among jurisdictions, emergency management professionals should work with election leadership to identify the most appropriate personnel to participate in preparedness, continuity, planning, training, exercise, and coordination activities.

Building and Sustaining the Relationship

Once initial points of contact have been identified, election officials and emergency management professionals should establish routine communication and begin building a collaborative working relationship before an election cycle enters its most active operational periods.

The goal is not simply to exchange contact information. Rather, jurisdictions should strive to establish a sustained partnership that supports ongoing preparedness activities, information sharing, planning, training, exercises, continuity efforts, and coordinated problem-solving throughout the election cycle. This relationship serves as the foundation upon which all other election preparedness activities described throughout this Playbook are built.

Coordinating Across Levels of Government

The partnership between election officials and emergency management professionals exists within a larger governmental structure. Successful coordination depends on active engagement across every level of government: federal, state, and local. Cross-sector coordination is most effective when it happens at matching levels: local election officials with local emergency management, state election offices with state emergency management agencies, and so on.

Coordinating “up” or “down” levels, such as a local election official contacting a state emergency management agency directly, can create confusion about authority, resources, and lines of communication. Within each same-level partnership, it is equally important that each sector keep the other’s relevant personnel informed, not only at the primary point of contact but throughout the chain of command. Maintaining a basic understanding of key personnel and their designated backups ensures continuity if an individual is unavailable or directly affected by the emergency itself.

While same-level coordination should be the operational priority, periodic interagency and intergovernmental calls, which bring together election and emergency management contacts across multiple levels of government, help ensure a shared understanding of broad priorities, expectations, and terminology between the two sectors. This Playbook is designed to support both coordination models: same-level interagency partnership and broader intergovernmental alignment.

Building Regional and Peer Relationships

Officials in both elections and emergency management are encouraged to develop relationships with their relevant membership organizations.

- Election officials: state election associations, the **Election Center**, the **Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ)**, and the **International Association of Government Officials (iGO)**.
- Emergency managers: the **International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)**, the **National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)**, and **Big City Emergency Managers**.

First and foremost, these organizations enable the sharing of successful practices, peer learning, and the co-development of best practices. They also matter because emergencies do not respect the town, county, or state boundaries that humans have drawn. These organizations lay the groundwork for regional coordination of emergency response.

It is also important to acknowledge that intergovernmental and interagency relationships are not always seamless. Disagreements can arise within a sector over hierarchy, roles, or expectations, and the same is true across sectors, where differing priorities or past friction between specific state and local agencies may complicate coordination. Recognizing where these tensions exist, rather than assuming smooth cooperation by default, allows officials to plan around them proactively rather than being caught off guard in the middle of an emergency.

> **Regardless of these dynamics, the shared objective must remain constant: the successful, secure, and timely conduct of the election, whatever emergencies arise.**

Acknowledging friction where it exists, and building communication plans that account for it, is not a distraction from that goal; it is part of what makes achieving it possible.

Using this Playbook consistently builds a shared operating framework, so that when an emergency occurs, both sectors are working from aligned goals and familiar relationships. Familiarity, in these moments, is what allows for a calm, coordinated response.

Election Preparedness Partnership

Election officials and emergency management professionals should jointly identify, engage, coordinate, and maintain relationships with stakeholders based on local governance structures, operational requirements, identified risks, and available resources. Potential stakeholders may include:

- public safety agencies
- intelligence and information-sharing partners
- cybersecurity professionals
- infrastructure owners and operators
- public information personnel
- government leadership
- legal advisors
- accessibility and equity representatives
- technology vendors

The specific organizations involved will vary by jurisdiction. However, successful election preparedness efforts are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, regular communication, collaborative planning, and a shared commitment to maintaining continuity of election operations.

Coordination Throughout the Election Cycle

Jurisdictions are encouraged to maintain ongoing coordination between election officials and emergency management professionals throughout the election cycle, not just in the weeks before Election Day. This partnership serves as the nucleus of the jurisdiction's election preparedness program and provides the structure through which stakeholders can effectively collaborate before, during, and after an election.

For emergency managers, preparedness activities occur year-round as threats are reassessed, plans are revised, training is conducted, and exercises are delivered to strengthen partnerships and support community resilience.

Preparedness coordination structures may differ during pre-election preparedness activities, election operations, and post-election recovery or continuity activities. Jurisdictions should determine these structures in advance and document them within their Election Incident Action Plan. Additional guidance regarding coordination structures, meeting facilitation, operational periods, objectives, task management, and Election Incident Action Plans is provided in following modules.

Putting Into Practice

The checklist below should not be viewed as a one-time activity or final determination of stakeholder responsibilities. Rather, it serves as an initial foundation upon which jurisdictions can continue to build and refine their election preparedness efforts throughout the election cycle.

Roles, Responsibilities, Expectations, and Coordination Checklist

FOUNDATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

- [ ] A working relationship exists between election officials and emergency management professionals.
- [ ] Election officials and emergency management professionals understand one another's authorities, responsibilities, and capabilities.
- [ ] Primary and alternate points of contact have been identified between the election office and emergency management organization.
- [ ] Election officials and emergency management professionals have established shared expectations regarding their partnership and respective roles in election preparedness and continuity efforts.
- [ ] Election officials and emergency management professionals have identified the organizations, agencies, and stakeholders that should participate in election preparedness efforts within the jurisdiction.

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

- [ ] Stakeholders that support election preparedness, continuity, response, and recovery efforts have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate public safety partners have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate cybersecurity and technology partners have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate intelligence and information-sharing partners have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate communications and public information partners have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate infrastructure, facilities, and community lifeline partners have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate legal, accessibility, and equity partners have been identified.
- [ ] Judicial, legislative, and community stakeholders relevant to election operations have been identified.
- [ ] Appropriate state, regional, tribal, territorial, or federal partners have been identified, as applicable.
- [ ] Primary and alternate points of contact have been identified for participating stakeholders, where appropriate.

MULTI-LEVEL COORDINATION

- [ ] Same-level (interagency) points of contact are established between election officials and emergency management at the local level.
- [ ] Corresponding state-level points of contact have been identified for both sectors.
- [ ] Federal information-sharing and support contacts have been identified (e.g., EI-ISAC, MS-ISAC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)).
- [ ] Primary and alternate (backup) contacts are documented for each level, and each sector understands the other’s chain of command.
- [ ] A schedule for periodic interagency and intergovernmental coordination calls has been established.
- [ ] Relationships with relevant membership organizations have been established (state associations, NASED, NASS, Election Center, PLEJ, iGO; IAEM, NEMA, Big City Emergency Managers).
- [ ] Known points of friction or past coordination challenges have been acknowledged and accounted for in communication planning.
- [ ] An inventory of items necessary to conduct the election has been documented.
- [ ] Key election locations have been documented (polling sites, equipment storage, supply warehouses).

- [ ] A threat matrix for elections in the jurisdiction has been outlined (typically led by emergency management).

ROLES, AUTHORITIES, AND EXPECTATIONS

- [ ] Stakeholders understand their responsibilities, authorities, and decision-making roles related to election preparedness and continuity.
- [ ] Stakeholders understand the responsibilities, capabilities, limitations, and constraints of partner organizations.
- [ ] Significant overlaps in responsibilities and potential capability gaps have been identified.
- [ ] Stakeholders understand any legal, regulatory, policy, or procedural responsibilities relevant to election operations.
- [ ] Expectations regarding stakeholder participation, information sharing, and preparedness, continuity, response, and recovery support have been communicated.
- [ ] Stakeholders understand when and under what circumstances their organization should be engaged in election-related activities.
- [ ] Stakeholders understand how their organization contributes to overall election resilience and continuity.

SUSTAINMENT

- [ ] Stakeholder information is maintained and reviewed periodically.
- [ ] New stakeholders are identified and incorporated as organizational structures, personnel, authorities, or operational requirements change.
- [ ] Roles, responsibilities, and expectations are periodically reviewed and updated.
- [ ] Election officials and emergency management professionals continue to maintain and strengthen their partnership throughout the election cycle.
- [ ] Stakeholder relationships are maintained outside of active election periods.

Coordination Contact Directory (template)

For each entry below, record the primary and alternate official. This template operationalizes same-level coordination by pairing each sector’s contacts at matching levels of government.

Level	Role / Organization	Primary (name, phone, email)	Alternate (name, phone, email)
Emergency Management			
Local	Local Emergency Management		
State	State Emergency Management Agency		
Federal	FEMA; MS-ISAC		
Election Officials			
Local	Local Election Official (town and/or county)		
State	Chief Election Official / State Election Director		
Federal	EI-ISAC; EAC		

Important Considerations

Completion of this checklist does not establish a coordination structure, preparedness program, communications framework, continuity program, or Election Incident Action Plan. Instead, it provides a foundational understanding of the organizations, authorities, capabilities, and responsibilities that may support election preparedness and continuity efforts.

As jurisdictions continue implementing this Playbook, the roles, responsibilities, authorities, and expectations identified through this checklist will be refined and operationalized through coordination structures, recurring coordination activities, information-sharing processes, situational awareness activities, communications protocols, and Election Incident Action Plans. These efforts are jointly led by election officials and emergency management professionals.

Resources

The resources for this module are collected in the Resource Library at the end of this Playbook. Relevant groups:

→ FEMA frameworks and standards `#lib-fema`

→ Election security and information sharing `#lib-security`

→ Associations, contacts, and stakeholder mapping `#lib-associations`

→ Exercises and tabletop scenarios `#lib-exercises`

04 MODULE

Coordinated Structure

Coordination structures are essential operational tools, but they require intentional planning to build. This section outlines the collaborative planning process to guide election officials and emergency management on how to co-lead, align around a shared mission, and establish working relationships that withstand pressure.

Co-leading across agencies with distinct authorities, cultures, and operational rhythms requires deliberate effort. Because election officials and emergency managers operate with different training, vocabulary, and priorities, the planning process must create space to address these differences directly. The goal is to build strong interagency relationships and a unified operational mindset across all key partners.

Rather than relying on informal or ad-hoc check-ins, jurisdictions must establish a pre-determined, multi-stakeholder framework well before voting begins. This framework defines how election officials, emergency management, public safety, IT/cybersecurity, communications, legal, and facilities partners collaborate throughout the election cycle.

Core Planning Leadership & Key Stakeholder Roles

To ensure operational clarity, every agency must understand its exact responsibilities within the coordination framework. The jurisdiction's **election officials** and **emergency management professionals** act as joint Executive Co-Leads, driving the general election event planning, objective setting, and overall operational posture. Under NIMS doctrine, this relationship is called a **Unified Coordination Group (UCG)**: a multi-agency leadership body that brings together key decision-makers to coordinate strategy, resources, priorities, and communications during complex incidents or emergencies requiring a unified response.

1. Executive Planning Co-Leads

- **Election Officials (Primary Authority):** Hold sole statutory authority over election administration, ballot processing, voting system integrity, polling location management, and canvass/certification. Define operational requirements, statutory deadlines, and voting procedures.
- **Emergency Management Professionals (Operational Co-Lead):** Facilitate multi-agency planning, integrate election needs into local Emergency Operations Plans (EOP), provide resource-tracking mechanisms, monitor regional hazards (e.g., severe weather, utility outages), and manage the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)/Joint Information Center (JIC) infrastructure.

Before activating the full structure, executive co-leads should identify the specialized partners and stakeholders necessary to support their jurisdiction's unique operational requirements; key role considerations are outlined below. In most jurisdictions, these partners already participate in emergency preparedness, planning, training, and response activities led by the local emergency manager, providing election officials with a valuable opportunity to leverage established relationships, coordination mechanisms, and proven processes. ***Note:*** Please refer to the Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations module for more guidance on identifying partners. Below are some sector specific considerations.

2. Specialized Operational Partners

- **Public Safety & Law Enforcement (Police, Sheriff, Fire, EMS, 911):** Coordinates physical security protocols for central counting sites and voting locations, conducts traffic management, provides immediate emergency response, and maintains a visible de-escalation posture.
- **IT & Cybersecurity (Municipal IT, CISA, State Cyber Partners):** Oversees network security, voter registration database resilience, cyber-threat monitoring, hardware/software troubleshooting, and field technical support.
- **Communications & Public Information (Public Information Offices / Joint Information Centers):** Manages joint public messaging, monitors rumor control, addresses false information, and coordinates emergency alerts or voting updates via a unified Joint Information Center.
- **Legal Counsel (County/City Attorney / Municipal Counsel):** Advises co-leads on election law compliance, emergency orders, polling place changes, court injunctions, and can assist legal escalation pathways.
- **Facilities & Public Works / Utility Partners:** Guarantees facility access, manages building logistics, oversees backup power/generator staging, and ensures roadway access to voting centers and drop boxes.

Coordination demands change across the election lifecycle. This Playbook organizes collaboration around three operational phases: pre-election preparedness, Election Day operations, and post-election wrap-up. These phases are described in detail in the Incident Action Planning module. By defining primary contacts, backups, and decision-making authorities in advance across all three phases, partners maintain clarity on roles, activation triggers, and escalation pathways from initial planning through final certification.

Step-by-Step Implementation Guide

1. Identify and Engage Key Stakeholders

- [ ] Assemble primary representatives and secondary backups across all participating agencies. Core co-leads (Elections and Emergency Management) engage supporting functions including Public Safety, IT/Cybersecurity, Communications/PIOs, Legal Counsel, and Facilities/Public Works.

2. Define Governance, Escalation, and Authorities

- [ ] Establish clear operational guidelines before the cycle begins. Document who holds decision-making authority for specific triggers, when and how issues escalate, and the exact thresholds for transitioning between routine monthly meetings, Election Day activation, and post-election oversight.

3. Develop a Unified Incident Action Plan (IAP) Framework

- [ ] Draft a shared Election Incident Action Plan template outlining joint objectives, operational periods, task assignments, and agency-specific responsibilities tailored to each stage of the cycle (pre-election testing, early voting, Election Day, and canvass/certification). The Election Incident Action Plan should guide and facilitate all preparedness and coordination meetings with all stakeholders across the entire election lifecycle and its phases. It is a living document that tracks and updates the people, resources, objectives, tasks, follow-up actions, goals, and situational awareness as the election lifecycle goes on. The Incident Action Planning module provides a full framework for developing this plan.

4. Establish Phase-Specific Cadences

Calendar pre-determined coordination touchpoints across all three operational structures:

- [ ] Recurring (monthly, weekly, or daily depending on the jurisdiction's decision) preparedness/coordination meetings prior to the election.
- [ ] Shift briefings and real-time monitoring streams on Election Day.
- [ ] Debrief sessions during the post-election canvass.
- [ ] Ensure the jurisdiction's emergency management professionals activate and coordinate EOC/JIC operations for at least Election Day, maintaining direct communication with other command centers and key partners such as election officials and first responders.

5. Document, Practice, and Refine

- [ ] Publish the coordination plan and contact rosters in a central, accessible repository. Test the three structures through pre-election tabletop exercises to ensure operational familiarity, and conduct a post-election debrief to update the playbook for future cycles.

Sample Coordination Structure Diagram

Below is a structural concept designed for inclusion as a playbook graphic, illustrating how key stakeholder roles align under co-leadership:

Sample coordination structure. Election officials and emergency management co-lead, with specialized partners supporting.

05 MODULE

Communications Management Map

When false information moves fast, established channels and trusted voices matter most.

Election administration and emergency management are distinct but deeply complementary fields. Local election officials work within a strict framework of legal deadlines, zero room for error, and intense public scrutiny that demands absolute clarity in messaging. Meanwhile, emergency management professionals rely on scalable command systems designed for quick stabilization, resource deployment, and crisis communication. Securing the integrity of the voting process requires these two groups to bridge their different operational cultures and build shared communication channels long before the first ballot is cast.

You cannot effectively build communication channels, alert protocols, or escalation pathways in the middle of a live election emergency. A resilient election infrastructure relies on formalizing this partnership at the very start of the planning cycle. This ensures that legal expertise and emergency logistics function together as a single, synchronized system.

A **Communication Management Map** acts as a year-round operational bridge. This pre-negotiated matrix is built on four core pillars:

Pillar 01

Who to Call and When

Decision & Notification Hierarchy. Outlines exactly what counts as a true emergency, who is in charge, and the rules for sounding the alarm.

Pillar 02

Who Needs to Know What

Communication Universe. Ensures your staff, field workers, and outside partners get the exact facts they need to do their jobs without getting overwhelmed.

Pillar 03

Backup Channels

PACE Plan for Continuity of Communications. Four levels of communication tools PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency), so coordination can still occur if primary channels or technology are impacted.

Pillar 04

One Unified Voice

Joint Information System. Brings representatives from each agency together to verify information, develop consistent talking points, and send one unified message to keep voters informed, virtually or in person, through a Joint Information Center (JIC).

Together, these pillars may transform a chaotic crisis response into a structured, predictable flow of information. By co-authoring notification protocols, sharing secure data repositories, and aligning stakeholder networks during "blue-sky" periods, emergency coordination becomes a seamless extension of daily operations.

Putting Into Practice

1 Who to Call & When (Decision & Notification Hierarchy)

How a problem climbs the ladder (Escalation Pathways): Create a simple rulebook that ranks problems by how bad they are. For example:

LOW
A single voting machine is acting up. Handle it locally.

MEDIUM
A polling place loses power. Call the control center.

HIGH
A cyberattack or major safety threat occurs. Notify election officials' and emergency management professionals' leadership immediately.

Escalation pathways should make two things explicit. First, who each level is written for: frontline poll workers and hourly staff need a simple day-of reporting path, while election officials and emergency management professionals need defined triggers for engaging one another. Second, the point at which a problem leaves election office channels and engages emergency management, including activation of the EOC and the coordination structures described in the Coordinated Structure module. Write both down, and make sure the levels here align with the notification hierarchy in the communications matrix below.

Who decides and who gets called (Notification Protocols): For every level of problem, clearly write down:

- Who has the official power to say, *"This is a true emergency."*
- Exactly who needs to be called.
- How fast they need to be called (e.g., *If it's a High-level emergency, leadership must be called within 15 minutes.*)

2 Who Needs to Know What (Communication Universe)

- **Map out your communication universe:** Sit down before the election and list every single group you might need to contact. Group these audiences by what they actually need to do their jobs. Give them the vital information, but don't clog their channels with background noise that may slow things down.
- **Fill out your communication matrix:** Put that list into a master chart so your team knows exactly who gets told what, and how fast. Use the framework below to build out your specific local contact list.
- **Write your messages before you need them:** Draft sample messages for the scenarios you are most likely to face, such as a polling place relocation, an equipment failure, a power outage, or a false claim spreading online. Leave blanks for the details you cannot know in advance. Route the drafts to the designated communication decision makers for approval well before Election Day, and note who approved each one and when. Store the approved versions in a shared location your staff and partners can reach quickly, and review them at the start of each election cycle. Writing and clearing this language during a quiet period saves time during an incident and keeps the election office and its partners saying the same thing.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS MATRIX

Stakeholder Group	Who They Are	What They Need to Know	When to Notify
Internal Leadership	Election officials, emergency management professionals, City/County Managers, Mayor	Critical infrastructure failures, active security threats, statutory changes	Immediate (Within minutes of verification)
Frontline Operations	Poll workers, roaming tech support, emergency management field personnel	Operational adjustments, safety protocols, equipment updates	Regularly/Hourly or as changes dictate
External Responders	Local/State/Federal Law Enforcement, Cybersecurity (CISA), Utilities	Facility status, route access, localized grid failures	Immediate during disruptions
The Public & Media	Local news outlets, voters, community advocates	Verified updates on voting hours, alternate polling sites, safety assurances	Continuous/ Scheduled updates via Joint Information System (JIS)

3 Backup Communication Channels (The PACE Plan)

- **Identify your shared tools:** Technical teams from both offices should sit down together and list the tools they have. Explicitly label which secure tools will be used for normal daily chat versus what will be used only in a crisis using the PACE model.

- **Build in backup systems:** Determine what communication resources are available in the jurisdiction through stakeholders, train on them, and make them available where possible and necessary. Never rely on just one way to send a message.

4 One Unified Voice (Joint Information System)

- **Develop rules for sharing information:** Set a strict rule that neither team shares information with the media or public without designated communications decision makers signing off first.
- **Speak as one team:** Put your public communication staff in the same room (or on the same private chat) during an emergency. This stops mixed messages and ensures the public gets one single source of truth.
- **Coordinate with the wider response:** In the case of a natural disaster or other local emergency, the election-focused JIS may need to coordinate with an Emergency Operations Center or JIC set up to respond to that emergency.

Leveraging Communications under Emergency Management Doctrine

Emergency management organizations routinely manage communication during complex incidents and maintain established relationships with media outlets, public information officers (PIOs), elected officials, public safety partners, broadcasters, and community organizations. These communication networks can provide election officials with valuable mechanisms for distributing urgent information before, during, and after an incident affecting election operations.

Joint Information System (JIS)

A Joint Information System (JIS) is the framework used to coordinate public information among multiple organizations involved in an incident or event. The JIS enables agencies to:

- Share information rapidly
- Coordinate messaging
- Identify false information or rumors
- Resolve conflicting communications
- Ensure consistent public messaging

The JIS does not remove authority from participating organizations. Instead, it provides a mechanism for coordinating communications while allowing each organization to continue communicating with its stakeholders.

For election-related incidents, election officials remain the authoritative source for election administration information, while emergency management organizations coordinate broader incident communications affecting the community.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

A Joint Information Center (JIC) is a physical or virtual location where communications personnel from multiple organizations collaborate to develop and coordinate public messaging. A JIC may be established during:

- Major weather events
- Large-scale power outages
- Civil disturbances
- Cybersecurity incidents
- Significant Election Day disruptions
- Other incidents requiring multi-agency coordination

When activated, election officials should consider participating in the JIC to ensure election information is incorporated into coordinated public messaging efforts.

Public Information Officers (PIOs)

Public Information Officers serve as official communicators for their organizations and play a critical role during incidents affecting election operations. Election officials should establish relationships with:

- Emergency management PIOs
- Local government communications offices
- Public safety communications personnel
- State election communications representatives

These relationships should be established before Election Day and exercised regularly through meetings, training, and exercises.

Rumor Management and False Information Response

Election incidents often generate rumors, false information, inaccurate reporting, and public confusion. Even minor operational disruptions may produce significant public concern if information is delayed or inconsistent.

Election officials and emergency management partners should establish procedures for:

- Monitoring public reporting
- Identifying false information
- Verifying information rapidly
- Coordinating corrective messaging
- Providing regular situation updates

The most effective response to false information is often the rapid release of accurate, verified, and transparent information from trusted sources.

Leveraging Emergency Management Communication Networks

Emergency management organizations often maintain communication pathways that may not routinely be available to election offices. These capabilities can significantly increase the speed and reach of election-related notifications during emergencies.

Examples may include:

- Television broadcasters
- Radio stations
- Emergency Alert System partners
- Public safety communications networks
- Local government communication platforms
- Wireless emergency notification systems
- Community and nonprofit partners
- Infrastructure and utility providers
- Social media coordination networks

While election officials remain responsible for election information, emergency management partners can help distribute critical messages through established and trusted public communication channels.

Team Planning Questions

Before the election, leaders from both teams should sit down, talk through communications systems, identify key questions, discuss and write down the answers, and revisit the information regularly leading up to the election. A sample of questions for discussion:

- What exact problem is big enough to trigger an emergency alert from one agency to the other?
- Where are we keeping our shared list of emergency cell numbers and backup plans, and how do we keep it safe/secure and available regardless of emergency type?
- How will we send quick updates to poll workers without letting the general public overhear private operational chat?
- If the cell networks or internet go down on Election Day, what is our exact backup plan?
- Do we have shared radio channels or satellite backups ready, call signs designated, has our staff actually tested them recently, do they need to be charged and do we have back-up power for them?

- How will we double-check online rumors or threats (like fake emergencies or missing ballot scares) before we make a public statement?
- If a crisis happens, who is the designated spokesperson for election questions, and who speaks for public safety?

Sample Timeline for Implementation

- **At least 6 Months Out:** Convene the initial communications alignment sessions between election officials and emergency management professionals. Define roles, establish the notification thresholds, and draft cross-agency communication protocols.
- **3 Months Out:** Map out the communication universe. Identify individual stakeholders, collect secondary emergency contact numbers, and establish a regular maintenance cadence to update these lists as staffing changes occur.
- **1 Month Out:** Set up and test the private channel your staff and partners will use to coordinate day-to-day operations. This is a restricted group chat, message board, or radio channel, separate from public-facing communication, where staff can report problems, request resources, and share operational updates without the general public listening in. Conduct a joint tabletop exercise using a simulated crisis (e.g., a cyber disruption or a flash flood) to stress-test your communication protocols.
- **1 Week Out:** Lock down distribution lists. Verify that all automated text/email strings work perfectly. Pre-approve crisis communication templates (holding statements) for the media.
- **Election Day & Post-Election:** Execute the map. Maintain a continuous loop of shared situational awareness. Issue scheduled, coordinated public updates via a single, verified public information stream to combat false information.

INTERACTIVE TOOL

Communications Timeline Calculator

Enter your election date. Every step in the sample timeline above updates automatically, with the day of the week and a check for weekend and federal holiday conflicts.

ELECTION DATE

11/03/2026

ALIGNMENT SESSIONS, DAYS BEFORE

180

Six months is the floor. Start earlier if you are building the communications plan from scratch.

COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW, DAYS AFTER

30

Hold it after certification. Confirm your state's deadline.

Next up: **Private coordination channel live** on Oct. 4, 2026, 20 days out. 2 steps need a scheduling adjustment.

PRE-ELECTION COMMUNICATIONS

7
May 2026
Thursday

APPROX. 180 DAYS BEFORE

Communications alignment sessions

Convene the initial communications alignment sessions between election officials and emergency management professionals. Define roles, establish the notification thresholds, and draft cross-agency communication protocols.

Thursday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

5
Aug. 2026
Wednesday

90 DAYS BEFORE

Map the communication universe

Identify individual stakeholders, collect secondary emergency contact numbers, and establish a regular maintenance cadence to update these lists as staffing changes occur. Draft the sample messages you expect to need and route them for approval.

Wednesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

4
Oct. 2026
Sunday

30 DAYS BEFORE

Private coordination channel live

Set up and test the private channel your staff and partners will use to coordinate day-to-day operations, separate from public-facing communication. Confirm every user can reach it and knows what belongs there.

Falls on a weekend. Move the operational deadline earlier, never later.

4
Oct. 2026
Sunday

30 DAYS BEFORE EXERCISE

Joint communications tabletop exercise

Run a simulated crisis, such as a cyber disruption or a flash flood, to stress-test the notification thresholds, the escalation pathway, and the backup channels in your PACE plan.

Falls on a weekend. Move the operational deadline earlier, never later.

27
Oct. 2026
Tuesday

7 DAYS BEFORE

Lock down distribution lists

Verify that every automated text and email string sends correctly. Confirm the crisis communication templates, including holding statements for the media, are approved and reachable by the staff who will need them.

Tuesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

ELECTION DAY

3
Nov. 2026
Tuesday

DAY 0

Execute the map

Maintain a continuous loop of shared situational awareness. Issue scheduled, coordinated public updates through a single, verified public information stream to counter false information.

Tuesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

POST-ELECTION

3
Dec. 2026
Thursday

30 DAYS AFTER

Communications after-action review

Review what moved through which channel and how fast, where the notification thresholds held or failed, and which messages needed rewriting under pressure. Update the matrix, the contact lists, and the approved templates before the next cycle.

Thursday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

BEFORE YOU RELY ON THESE DATES

- None of these offsets are set by statute. They reflect recommended practice and should be adjusted to your staffing, your election calendar, and the number of partners you coordinate with.
- If a step lands on a weekend or holiday, move it earlier, never later. Testing a channel after the period it is meant to cover has already started defeats the purpose.
- The 90-day step assumes the alignment sessions have already happened. If your kickoff runs later than 90 days out, the two steps collapse together and the timeline reorders to match.
- The scheduling check covers weekends and federal holidays. It does not know your state and local holidays, so check those separately.
- These dates cover communications planning only. The Election Readiness Deadline Calculator in the Calendar and Timeline module covers the broader operational milestones.

06 MODULE

Election-Specific Hazards and Threats

A flooded polling place is a relocation problem, a communications problem, and a chain-of-custody problem all at once.

Election offices face more kinds of threats than they used to. Some are physical. A storm damages a polling place, or a fire makes a ballot storage site unsafe to enter. Some are informational, like a deepfake that circulates hours before polls open or a leak of sensitive material. Others are infrastructural, like a power failure at a central count facility. On the surface these look like different problems. What they ask of an office is much the same. Each one interrupts operations, strains communication and raises questions about the security of ballots and equipment.

Two ideas run through the scenarios that follow.

- **An all-hazards approach, informed by local risk.**
  Instead of writing a separate plan for every possible trigger, officials plan around the operational effect. A relocation plan works whether the cause is a flood or a utility failure. A verification protocol works whether a suspicious directive comes by phone or by deepfake. That is the reason AI incidents belong inside existing emergency planning and not off to the side as a cybersecurity problem.
- **The emergency management lifecycle.**
  Preparedness, response, and recovery give officials a consistent way to move through any scenario. That work starts with lining up alternate sites and points of contact before Election Day. It ends with an after-action review once the incident closes.

An election office cannot manage any of this alone. Utility providers decide when the power comes back. Facility owners and law enforcement decide whether a relocation is possible. A deepfake may run through a public information officer or a joint information center. In each case the resources, the authority and the situational awareness an office needs sit with partners outside the building. Coordination that starts during the incident starts too late. Roles, contacts and communication channels should be set before Election Day, and election operations should have a seat during EOC activation so that critical sites are accounted for when decisions get made.

The scenarios below are meant to be adapted to a jurisdiction's own structure, capabilities and risks. The larger point holds everywhere.

> **Preparing alongside emergency management is what turns a shared dependency into a coordinated response.**

Putting Into Practice

Coordination Considerations

Election offices should identify roles, responsibilities, communication procedures, and points of contact with key partners prior to Election Day. The Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations module covers identifying these partners in detail.

Election officials should also determine how election operations will be represented during an EOC activation and establish common procedures for sharing situational awareness, operational decisions, and resource requests. This can be accomplished through regular coordination meetings.

These meetings should identify primary and alternative representatives from each agency, discuss upcoming election milestones, emerging threats, and include scenario-based exercises. The recurring meeting schedule is jurisdiction and election cycle specific; the frequency of coordination meetings should increase as Election Day approaches or when threats emerge. Additionally, post-election meetings are just as important as they can be used to review lessons learned and corrective actions.

Emergency management organizations routinely assess threats, hazards, vulnerabilities, and operational risks that may affect their communities. Through established preparedness processes, emergency managers evaluate a broad range of potential disruptions including severe weather, power outages, cyber incidents, transportation disruptions, public safety incidents, and other events that could impact critical services and operations. Election officials should engage with their local emergency management partners to understand the threats and hazards identified within their jurisdiction and use this information to inform election preparedness, continuity planning, training, exercises, and contingency procedures. By incorporating locally identified risks into election planning efforts, election officials can better anticipate potential impacts, prioritize preparedness activities, and develop more resilient election operations aligned with community-wide preparedness and resilience initiatives.

Many election offices conduct planning based on election-specific concerns alone. Leveraging existing emergency management risk assessments allows election officials to benefit from an established, data-informed understanding of local threats rather than developing a separate risk assessment process from scratch, fostering greater alignment, efficiency, and preparedness across both organizations.

The following scenarios illustrate how an all-hazards approach can be applied to common election-specific threats. While each incident presents unique challenges, many require the same operational principles and partner coordination. Rather than serving as standalone procedures, these examples demonstrate how the

emergency management principles of preparedness, response, and recovery can be adapted across a variety of incidents while maintaining election operations and public confidence.

SCENARIO 01

Relocating Polling Facilities During Active Voting

Emergency situations that require polling facilities to relocate can result from severe weather, public health emergencies, security incidents, or infrastructure failures. While each event warrants incident-specific considerations, the operational priorities are largely the same: an all-hazards approach centered on preparedness, response, and recovery helps election officials relocate polling operations while maintaining election operations.

Preparedness

OPERATIONAL PLANNING

- Identify alternate polling locations before Election Day.
- Evaluate alternate facilities for ADA compliance, parking, traffic flow, and utilities.
- Determine the legal authority and decision-making process for relocation or consolidation of polling places. (See state specific laws: National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], n.d.)
- Consider using early voting locations where appropriate.
- Develop procedures for securely transferring ballots and equipment while maintaining chain of custody.
- Prepare directional signage for relocated polling places.
- Draft sample public messages in advance and route them through the designated communication decision makers for approval before Election Day. Write fill-in-the-blank versions for each likely audience, including voters, poll workers, the media, and partner agencies, so only the location, time, and incident details need to be added when an incident occurs. Store the approved versions where staff can reach them quickly, and review them each cycle.

READINESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Maintain rosters and contact information of poll workers and backup staff.
- Cross-train staff and establish succession plans.
- Ensure alternate locations have the necessary resources to support voting.
- Ensure a process is in place for moving or acquiring any resources necessary for alternate locations.
- Protect vital documents and records and maintain secure backups.

Relocation planning should be reviewed regularly as part of broader election resilience efforts. Self-assessment tools, such as Ready for Tuesday's **Ready for Resilience Assessment**, can help jurisdictions evaluate continuity planning, alternate facilities, communications, and coordination before an incident occurs.

Response

- Activate continuity procedures and notify staff, workers, and key partners.
- Verify the alternate polling location is safe, accessible, and operational.
- Securely transport ballots, equipment, and supplies while maintaining proper chain of custody.
- Deploy directional signage, necessary security, and accessibility measures at the alternate location.
- Share pre-approved public messaging to inform and direct voters.

Recovery

- Conduct an after-action review with election officials and emergency management partners.
- Document operational decisions and timelines.
- Update contingency plans based on lessons learned.

CASE STUDY

Hurricane Ian — Southwest Florida, 2022

In 2022, the Gulf Coast of Florida was hit by Hurricane Ian, a Category 4 storm. This late September disaster rendered numerous polling locations unusable and displaced both workers and voters, especially in Lee County. Damage to polling locations and staffing shortages required operational changes before Election Day. As a result, Governor Ron DeSantis issued an executive order establishing additional early voting sites, consolidated polling locations, and extended early voting. Election officials navigated temporary addresses for mail voting, identified alternate locations, and issued public messaging.

The takeaway: Hurricane Ian demonstrated that successful relocation depends on decisions made long prior to an incident actually occurring. Election officials were able to adapt operations while preserving voter access because contingency plans, legal authorities, and coordination mechanisms had been established before the incident. This experience also illustrated the importance of minimizing voter disruption and ensuring accessibility by relocating polling places close to their original locations when possible.

SCENARIO 02

Recovering ballots and other election materials from hazardous or compromised locations

There are numerous potential incidents that may result in hazardous or compromised polling locations, including fire, flooding, structural damage, utility failure, or law enforcement activity. While each situation presents unique operational challenges or threats to safety, developing separate procedures for every possible hazard is neither practical nor necessary. Instead, election officials should apply an all-hazards approach that emphasizes preparedness, coordinated response, and recovery while prioritizing responder safety, ballot security, and chain of custody.

Preparedness

OPERATIONAL PLANNING

- Establish procedures for recovering ballots, technology and other election materials while maintaining chain-of-custody procedures.
- Identify alternate transportation methods, routes, and secure storage locations.
- Develop procedures for documenting damaged ballots, voting equipment, and election materials.
- Determine legal authorities and reporting requirements for recovering or relocating election materials.

READINESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Maintain current inventories of critical election equipment and backup supplies.
- Cross-train personnel and establish succession plans.
- Ensure vital records are protected (e.g., voter registration data, ballot accounting, contingency plans) via secure physical and digital backups.

One method to ensure these boxes are checked is to prepare a **Go-Kit** containing chain-of-custody materials, communication equipment, incident documentation forms, and other necessary supplies.

Preparedness also relies on training that puts these plans into practice. Conduct regular exercises that validate ballot recovery procedures, including chain of custody, transportation, documentation, and communications. Include emergency management, law enforcement, fire/rescue, and other supporting agencies in these scenario-based exercises to strengthen coordination before an incident occurs.

Response

- Activate continuity procedures and notify key partners.

- Verify the safety of the scene before recovering ballots and materials with the appropriate response agencies.
- Document damage to election materials and any operational decisions made.

Recovery

- Conduct an after-action review with election and emergency partners.
- Update recovery procedures based on lessons learned.
- Replenish damaged or expended election supplies.

Recovery is a shared responsibility, and it is where partnerships with emergency management partners shine. After action reviews with partner agencies can identify capability gaps and assist with resource coordination following the event.

EXAMPLE EXERCISE

During Election Day, a fire sprinkler malfunctions inside a polling location and activates, damaging voted ballots awaiting transport.

Objectives

- Determine who has authority to enter the scene, which partners should be notified, and when ballots can be recovered.
- Maintain chain-of-custody.
- Refer to the communications matrix and coordinate public statements through the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Document operational decisions made.

SCENARIO 03

Total or partial loss of electrical power at critical sites

There is a common operational challenge across many election hazards: loss of power. Electrical power loss may result from a variety of incidents, but one point remains the same: electricity is a mission-essential function of modern election administration. Within an all-hazards preparedness framework, jurisdictions should incorporate power loss readiness into election planning.

Power Loss Preparedness Checklist

- Test backup generators, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems, and emergency lighting before Election Day.
- Maintain adequate supplies:
  - Fuel
  - Batteries
  - Chargers
  - Extension Cords
- Establish manual procedures for continuing operations if electronic systems fail or become unavailable. This includes:
  - Voter registration
  - Ballot issuance
  - Ballot tabulation
- Maintain emergency contact information for utility providers, IT personnel, the State election office, generator vendors, and voting system vendors.
- Coordinate with IT to:
  - Establish power outage response procedures consistent with jurisdictional and state cybersecurity guidelines.
  - Identify critical systems that require uninterrupted power (e.g., electronic poll books, management systems, networking software).
  - Verify backup internet connectivity for items like electronic poll books.
- Provide poll workers and staff with written procedures for operating during a power loss event.

CASE STUDY

Midnight Power Outage — Shasta County, California, 2026

During California's June 2026 primary election, the Shasta County Elections Office temporarily halted ballot counting following a midnight power interruption. County Clerk and Registrar of Voters Clint Curtis stated that, despite critical election equipment being connected to backup power, the outage shut down peripheral systems and required staff to restart and verify equipment before counting could resume, delaying operations by more than an hour (Action News Now, 2026; KRCR News, 2026).

The takeaway: This incident demonstrates the importance of routinely testing backup generators, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems, connected peripherals, and system recovery procedures before Election Day. It also reinforces the need to identify mission-essential election systems, establish procedures for restoring operations after a power interruption, and ensure staff are trained to implement those procedures efficiently.

SCENARIO 04

Sensitive information leaks

Election offices maintain a wide range of sensitive information related to election operations, administration, cybersecurity, and voter records. Unauthorized disclosure may result from cyberattacks, human error, insider threats, or physical loss of materials. Regardless of the cause, the operational priorities remain the same: limit further disclosure, assess operational impacts, preserve public confidence, and coordinate response.

Preparedness

OPERATIONAL PLANNING

- Identify sensitive election information pursuant to the specific jurisdiction.
- Classify information according to operational sensitivity and access requirements.
- Develop procedures for reporting suspected information leaks through the chain-of-command.
- Conduct an election security risk assessment

READINESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Train staff on secure information handling and reporting procedures and exercise incident response.
- Protect vital election records through secure physical and digital storage.

Response

- Determine if additional information remains at risk.
- Verify the authenticity and completeness of leaked information. Leaked information may contain altered or fabricated content alongside authentic and sensitive information.
- Preserve evidence and report the incident.
- Coordinate public communications before releasing information to the press.

Response to a sensitive information leak requires coordinated action across multiple disciplines. Election officials should work closely with IT personnel to determine the scope of the incident, contain further unauthorized disclosure, and preserve systems. It is also important to work closely with PIOs and any Joint Information Center (JIC), as appropriate, to develop accurate and timely messaging to the public. Depending on the nature of the incident, election officials may also need to coordinate with legal counsel, the State Election Office, or law enforcement. This is where an emergency management partnership can be critical; EOC coordination can facilitate information sharing, resource coordination, and operational decision-making among the agencies involved.

Recovery

- Assess operational impacts to election functions.
- Conduct an after-action review with relevant partners.
- Update information handling procedures, training, and incident response based on lessons learned.

Information leaks are not solely cybersecurity events; they are operational incidents that require coordinated response, clear public communication, and continuous improvement to preserve elections operations and public trust.

SCENARIO 05

Deepfakes

AI generated content in the form of deepfakes has already flooded the political sphere in campaign ads and information guides. While there are resources to educate voters about how to identify and combat these instances of false information, it is especially important that election officials properly navigate AI use across media in order to provide accurate and timely information to voters.

Deepfakes are not solely issues of false information; AI threats present a broader operational problem. As deepfakes proliferate online, both internal and external trust and confidence are eroded. The successful deception of the deepfake is not the only threat: even mere uncertainty increases operational stress (Elahi, 2026). Offices ought to anticipate the need to authenticate communications during an AI related incident and have verification procedures incorporated into emergency plans. Election officials should determine before Election Day how AI incidents will be coordinated with emergency management partners, including any Public Information Officers (PIOs), Joint Information Centers (JICs), and Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).

Preparedness

VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

- Establish verification procedures for unexpected operational directives.
- Never implement operational changes based solely on video, email, text message, phone call, or social media.
- Verify unexpected requests through an independent communication channel.
- Require two-person verification for major operational decisions (e.g., polling place relocation, equipment movement, staffing changes).
- Use known contact information and established chain-of-command when confirming directives.

The role of the office is not to identify if content is real or fake, rather, whether or not it has been verified through official communication procedures.

READINESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Incorporate AI-enabled incidents into emergency exercises and continuity planning.
- Include deepfakes in phishing awareness and cybersecurity training.
- Conduct recurring training as AI capabilities evolve.
- Practice verification procedures, reporting requirements, and documentation during scenario-based exercises.

EXAMPLE EXERCISE

Three hours before polls open, an AI- generated video appears online showing the chief election official announcing numerous polling locations are closed.

Objectives

- Verify the authenticity of the announcement.
- Activate the pre-approved communication plan.
- Report the incident through the correct channels.
- Document the incident.

Response

COMMUNICATIONS

- Activate pre-approved public messaging.
- Direct voters to official information sources.
- Coordinate messaging with the PIO, JIC, or JIS, as appropriate.
- Utilize existing rumor control mechanisms or voter hotlines.
- Avoid unnecessarily amplifying false content when responding.

Trust is an operational variable, and it must be considered across emergency plans.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

- Preserve evidence (screenshots, links, timestamps, metadata where available).
- Report the incident through established reporting procedures.
- Document operational decisions and response actions.
- Evaluate whether continuity procedures or operational changes are necessary.

Deepfakes and AI related incidents should be incorporated into existing mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery planning rather than being treated as an isolated cybersecurity event.

Recovery

- Conduct an after-action review with election officials and emergency management partners.

- Update verification procedures, communications plans, and training based on lessons learned.
- Incorporate new AI tactics and emerging threats into future exercises.

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Resources

The resources for this module are collected in the Resource Library at the end of this Playbook. Relevant groups:

→ Continuity and contingency planning #lib-continuity

→ Election security and information sharing #lib-security

→ FEMA frameworks and standards #lib-fema

07 MODULE

Calendar and Timeline

Elections are continuous events with legally established statutory timelines, not just a single day in November. For emergency managers, understanding the election calendar is critical because it dictates when the jurisdiction is most vulnerable to operational disruptions and when essential functions must be supported. Federal and state laws mandate specific deadlines, such as the distribution of absentee ballots or the final certification of results that cannot be easily moved, even in the event of a disaster.

This module provides a unified framework to align emergency management preparedness with the election cycle. By integrating the election calendar into the emergency management rhythm, both election officials and emergency managers can jointly identify staffing needs, map out coordination meetings, anticipate heightened threat periods, and ensure that contingency plans are aligned with the non-negotiable deadlines of the election process.

Putting Into Practice

Effective coordination requires establishing a joint meeting timeline and operational milestones long before Election Day. Emergency managers and election officials should integrate the following milestones into their collaborative planning:

Meeting Timeline & Ongoing Coordination

- **Ongoing (Year-Round):** Establish a routine cadence (e.g., monthly meetings) between election officials and emergency management to review continuity of operations plans (COOPs), analyze hazard assessments, and conduct joint tabletop exercises (TTXs).
- **As the Election Approaches:** Transition from a monthly cadence to weekly or even daily touchpoints in the immediate weeks leading up to Election Day to ensure a common operating picture.
- **Outside of the Election Period:** Some emergency events outside of election cycles could still affect Election Officials like natural disasters that affect election technology or ballot secure storage. As such, election officials should be a part of Emergency Planning and Response regardless of the election schedule.

The Election Lifecycle Milestones

The milestones below are anchored to your election date. Use the deadline calculator at the end of this module to generate the specific dates for your jurisdiction, including the day of the week and a check for weekend and federal holiday conflicts. A spreadsheet version is available to download if you would rather work offline.

- **90 Days Out:** Finalize the joint Election Incident Action Plan (IAP). Ensure all critical stakeholders (law enforcement, facilities, IT, cybersecurity, and vendors) have validated their roles.
- **45 Days Out:** Federal law mandates that UOCAVA (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act) ballots be mailed to voters at least 45 days prior to a federal election. This marks the beginning of the active voting period. Emergency monitoring for cyber threats, mail disruptions, and physical security at ballot

processing facilities must be heightened from this point forward.

- **Joint Exercise (set locally, commonly 30 to 60 days out):** No law fixes this date. Schedule it after the joint Election Incident Action Plan is finalized and far enough before Election Day to correct any gaps it exposes. Treat this as a full-scale operational exercise for the General Election. Use this day to validate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) communication pathways, test interoperable radios, and audit incident reporting procedures.
- **Election Day:** This is the peak operational period requiring full EOC/JIC (Joint Information Center) activation or standby. Physical protective measures, crowd control, traffic management, and rapid response protocols for active threats or severe weather are fully deployed.
- **Post Election (Election Certification and Build Back Timeline):** The threat environment often persists (or escalates) after the polls close due to tight margins or delayed results. Further, the threat of other emergencies such as natural disasters does not stop after Election Day. Emergency management must maintain situational awareness during the official canvass, auditing, and certification periods (varies state by state, but often extending 14 to 30 days post-election). Build back and reconstitution follow. That work means securing vital records, closing down temporary facilities, and holding joint After-Action Reviews (AARs). Write what you learn back into the playbook.

INTERACTIVE TOOL

Election Readiness Deadline Calculator

Enter your election date. Every operational milestone below updates automatically, with the day of the week and a check for weekend and federal holiday conflicts.

ELECTION DATE

11/03/2026

JOINT EXERCISE, DAYS BEFORE

60

No fixed statutory offset. Set this to match your jurisdiction's exercise schedule.

CERTIFICATION DEADLINE, DAYS AFTER

30

Varies by state, commonly 14 to 30 days. Confirm against statute.

Next up: **UOCAVA ballot mailing deadline** on Sept. 19, 2026, 5 days out. 1 milestone needs a scheduling adjustment.

PRE-ELECTION PREPAREDNESS

5
Aug. 2026
Wednesday

90 DAYS BEFORE

Finalize joint incident action plan (IAP)

Ensure all critical stakeholders, including law enforcement, facilities, IT, cybersecurity, and vendors, have validated their roles in the joint IAP.

Wednesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

4
Sept. 2026
Friday

APPROX. 60 DAYS BEFORE

Joint full-scale exercise

Treat this as a full-scale operational exercise for the general election. Validate EOC communication pathways, test interoperable radios, and audit incident reporting procedures.

Friday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.

19
Sept. 2026
Saturday

45 DAYS BEFORE FEDERAL MANDATE

UOCAVA ballot mailing deadline

Federal law (52 U.S.C. 20302) requires UOCAVA ballots be mailed to uniformed and overseas voters at least 45 days before a federal election. The active voting period begins here. Heighten monitoring for cyber threats, mail disruptions, and physical security at ballot processing facilities from this point forward.

Falls on a weekend. Mail earlier. The 45-day requirement is a hard federal floor.

ELECTION DAY

3
Nov. 2026
Tuesday

DAY 0

Election Day

Peak operational period requiring full EOC and JIC activation or standby. Physical protective measures, crowd control, traffic management, and rapid response protocols for active threats or severe weather are fully deployed.

`Tuesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.`

POST-ELECTION

17
Nov. 2026
Tuesday

14 DAYS AFTER

Certification window opens

The threat environment often persists or escalates after polls close because of tight margins or delayed results. Maintain situational awareness during the official canvass, auditing, and certification periods.

`Tuesday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.`

3
Dec. 2026
Thursday

30 DAYS AFTER

Certification window closes, build back begins

Secure vital records, demobilize temporary facilities, and conduct collaborative after-action reviews to feed lessons learned back into the playbook. Confirm the certification deadline against state statute.

`Thursday. No weekend or federal holiday conflict.`

BEFORE YOU RELY ON THESE DATES

- The UOCAVA 45-day requirement applies to federal elections. The other offsets reflect recommended operational practice. Confirm each one against state statute and local procedure.
- If a deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, move the operational deadline earlier, never later. The UOCAVA mailing date is a hard federal floor.

- Milestones sort into chronological order as you change the inputs. Setting the joint exercise fewer than 45 days out places it after the UOCAVA deadline, inside the active voting period.
- Setting the certification deadline at 14 days or fewer removes the separate canvass milestone, since the window would otherwise close on or before it opens.
- The scheduling check covers weekends and federal holidays. It does not know your state and local holidays, so check those separately.

Resources

The resources for this module are collected in the Resource Library at the end of this Playbook. Relevant groups:

→ Calendars and timelines `#lib-calendars`

08 MODULE

Incident Action Planning

Every jurisdiction has unique risks, resources, and operational realities, meaning that disruptions to an election can occur with little or no warning. Incident Action Planning (IAP) provides the formal, multi-agency coordination structure necessary to integrate election officials and emergency responders under a unified command.

While election officials hold expertise in election law and voting operations, emergency managers bring vital capabilities in consequence management, resource procurement, and crisis response. This module focuses on mapping out the physical and logistical resources required to protect the election and outlines the consequence management planning needed when a crisis forces a sudden change to the initial election plan.

Incident Action Planning as the Foundation for Election Coordination

Although Incident Action Planning is traditionally associated with emergency response and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activations, the same planning principles can be successfully adapted to election preparedness. Elections represent one of the largest planned governmental events conducted by a jurisdiction, often involving hundreds of personnel, numerous facilities, complex logistics, multiple public safety partners, private sector organizations, technology providers, and local, state, and federal stakeholders. As such, elections benefit from a structured planning process that establishes shared objectives, documents responsibilities, coordinates resources, and supports collaborative decision-making throughout the election lifecycle.

Election preparedness should be viewed as a continuous, year-round process rather than a series of activities conducted immediately before an election. Emergency management organizations utilize an ongoing preparedness cycle that includes risk assessment, stakeholder coordination, planning, training, exercises, operational readiness, and post-incident improvement. Election officials can strengthen resilience by adopting a similar approach, routinely reviewing plans, updating contact information, evaluating emerging threats and hazards, conducting training and exercises, and incorporating lessons learned from previous elections or incidents. By treating preparedness as a continuous cycle of improvement, election offices can enhance readiness, build stronger partnerships, and ensure they are better positioned to respond to and recover from disruptions that may affect election operations. A simple annual cycle of *Assess → Plan → Train → Exercise → Conduct Operations → Evaluate → Improve* can provide election officials with a sustainable framework for maintaining preparedness and continuously strengthening election resilience over time.

For purposes of this Playbook, the Election Incident Action Plan (Election IAP) should be viewed as the central coordination document jointly developed and maintained by election officials and emergency management professionals. Rather than serving solely as an emergency response document, the Election Incident Action Plan provides a living framework for coordinating preparedness, continuity, response, and recovery activities before, during, and after each election.

The Election Incident Action Plan should not be viewed as a static document that is developed once and placed on a shelf. Instead, it should evolve throughout the election cycle as new information becomes available, preparedness activities are completed, risks change, resources are identified, and lessons are learned. It should

become the primary document used by election officials and emergency management professionals to guide recurring stakeholder coordination meetings and maintain a common operating picture across all participating organizations.

While this module provides recommended components and best practices, every jurisdiction is unique. Jurisdictions should tailor the Election Incident Action Plan to reflect their governance structure, available resources, identified risks, election complexity, operational environment, and organizational capabilities. Not every jurisdiction will utilize every component described within this module; rather, these elements should be considered scalable best practices that may be expanded or simplified as appropriate.

Consequence Management Throughout the Election Lifecycle

Emergency management is fundamentally centered on consequence management. Rather than planning separately for every possible hazard, emergency managers focus on understanding the operational consequences that incidents create and developing strategies to reduce, manage, and recover from those impacts.

This same philosophy should guide election preparedness.

Election officials and emergency management professionals should work together to identify the consequences that could disrupt election operations regardless of the initiating event. Whether caused by severe weather, a cybersecurity incident, infrastructure failure, criminal activity, civil unrest, public health emergencies, technological failures, or any other hazard, the focus should remain on maintaining essential election functions and minimizing operational disruption.

Examples of election consequences may include:

- Closure or relocation of voting locations
- Loss of ballot transportation routes
- Loss of utilities
- Technology disruptions
- Loss of communications
- Staffing shortages
- Facility evacuations
- Chain of custody concerns
- Delays to ballot processing
- Public confidence concerns
- Increased public information requirements
- Accessibility impacts
- Transportation disruptions

- Supply shortages

For each consequence, election officials and emergency management professionals should collaboratively determine:

- What essential election functions are affected?
- What decisions will likely be required?
- Which stakeholders should be engaged?
- What resources may be required?
- What continuity strategies should be implemented?
- What public messaging may be necessary?
- What recovery actions should occur?

Planning around operational consequences rather than individual hazards allows jurisdictions to build scalable, flexible, and adaptable plans capable of addressing a broad spectrum of incidents while reducing unnecessary complexity.

Resource Management and Emergency Support Coordination

Election operations depend on a variety of facilities, personnel, equipment, technology systems, and support services that may be affected by emergencies or unexpected disruptions. Emergency management organizations maintain established processes for coordinating resources across government agencies, private-sector partners, and other stakeholders during incidents. Election officials should work with their local emergency management partners to understand how to request assistance, identify resource requirements, and coordinate contingency support before an emergency occurs. Potential support may include backup power, fuel, communications equipment, facility support, transportation assets, security resources, or other capabilities needed to sustain election operations. Leveraging existing emergency management resource coordination processes promotes efficiency, reduces duplication of effort, and ensures election-related needs are incorporated into broader community response and recovery activities.

Election officials should avoid creating separate emergency resource request procedures whenever possible. Instead, election resource requirements should be integrated into existing local and state emergency management coordination structures, enabling election offices to benefit from established resource networks, mutual aid agreements, situational awareness processes, and emergency support capabilities already in place within their jurisdiction.

Putting Into Practice

Developing the Election Incident Action Plan

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Election Action Plan Template

Built from an actual jurisdiction's plan for a past election, then generalized so any office can adapt it.

Download the template (DOCX)

Ready for Resilience

A self-assessment tool developed by Ready for Tuesday. It helps jurisdictions evaluate continuity planning, alternate facilities, communications and coordination before an incident occurs.

Take the assessment

The **Election Incident Action Plan** should be jointly developed by election officials and emergency management professionals and should serve as the primary coordination document used throughout the election cycle.

Although jurisdictions may organize their Election Incident Action Plans differently, recommended planning considerations include:

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

- Purpose
- Scope
- Authorities
- Planning assumptions
- Guiding principles
- Operational period
- Version history

ELECTION OVERVIEW

- Election type

- Election timeline
- Important milestones
- Operational periods
- Key dates

SITUATION SUMMARY

- Current operating environment
- Election-specific hazards and threats
- Local hazard information
- Intelligence summaries
- Threat assessment summaries
- State or local Fusion Center assessments
- Law enforcement intelligence
- Weather outlooks
- Special events
- Planned demonstrations
- Infrastructure concerns

Whenever possible, jurisdictions should establish recurring engagement with their state or local Fusion Center and law enforcement intelligence partners to receive updated threat assessments throughout the election cycle. Emergency management professionals are often well positioned to facilitate these relationships and integrate intelligence products into the planning process while ensuring election officials remain informed of emerging risks.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Polling place locations
- Vote center locations
- Ballot drop boxes
- Election warehouses
- Ballot processing facilities
- Central count facilities
- Alternate voting locations
- Emergency relocation sites
- Maps

- Facility layouts
- Geographic considerations

PREPAREDNESS STRATEGY

Election officials and emergency management professionals should jointly establish preparedness priorities for the election cycle.

These priorities may be informed by:

- FEMA Core Capabilities. These are the 32 activities FEMA identifies in the National Preparedness Goal as necessary to manage any major incident. They are grouped into five mission areas: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Examples include operational coordination, public information and warning, situational assessment, and infrastructure systems. Emergency managers already plan against them, so using the same list gives election officials and emergency management a shared vocabulary for setting priorities.
- Jurisdiction-specific preparedness priorities
- Lessons learned
- Corrective actions
- Threat assessments
- Hazard analyses
- Local operational priorities
- Resource management strategy and request process

STAKEHOLDERS

The Election Incident Action Plan should identify participating stakeholders, including:

- Lead agency, including defined members of the Unified Coordination Group (recognizing the authorities of, and relationship between, election and emergency management officials)
- Supporting agencies
- Assigned representatives
- Roles and responsibilities
- Resources provided
- Authorities
- Points of contact

COORDINATION STRUCTURE

The Election Incident Action Plan should document the jurisdiction's agreed-upon coordination structure for:

- Pre-election preparedness
- Election Day operations
- Post-election recovery

The specific coordination structure should be jointly developed by election officials and emergency management professionals and tailored to the jurisdiction. Additional guidance on coordination structures is provided in the Coordinated Structure module of this Playbook.

OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

One of the most valuable portions of the Election Incident Action Plan is documenting objectives and associated tasks.

For each objective, jurisdictions should document:

- Objective
- Description
- Action items
- Lead stakeholder
- Supporting stakeholders
- Required resources
- Target completion date
- Current status
- Follow-up actions
- Notes
- Corrective actions

As coordination meetings occur throughout the election cycle, these objectives should be reviewed, updated, completed, modified, or added as necessary.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Election Incident Action Plan should include comprehensive stakeholder contact information, including local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector partners to support rapid coordination when needed.

Maintaining the Election Incident Action Plan

Once the initial Election Incident Action Plan has been developed, election officials and emergency management professionals should establish a recurring coordination cadence appropriate for their jurisdiction. These meetings may occur monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, daily, or at another frequency determined by the jurisdiction, and the cadence should increase as Election Day approaches.

During each coordination meeting, stakeholders should collaboratively review the Election Incident Action Plan, discuss current situational awareness, update objectives and tasks, document completed preparedness activities, identify emerging risks, discuss resource needs, capture decisions, assign follow-up actions, and document new information.

The Election Incident Action Plan should remain available to participating stakeholders and be updated after each coordination meeting to maintain a common operating picture and ensure all partners are working from the most current operational information.

To operationalize the plan, emergency managers and election officials must collaboratively inventory their resources and anticipate high-impact consequences.

List of Resources (Pre-Election, Election Day, Post-Election)

- **Need to Have:**
  - *Pre-Election:* A fully updated **COOP**, documented **mutual aid agreements**, and a **Primary/Alternate/Contingency/Emergency (PACE) communications plan**.
  - *Election Day:* **Physical security patrols** for voting centers and the central counting facility, law enforcement quick-response teams, and **interoperable communication tools** (e.g., 800MHz radios or satellite phones).
  - *Post-Election:* **Secure, off-site storage** for vital records and **3-2-1 backups** of the voter registration database to ensure continuity during the certification process.
- **Should Have:**
  - *Pre-Election:* **Go-Kits** prepared with essential supplies, administrative items, and chain-of-custody materials that can be deployed to an alternate facility within an hour.
  - *Election Day:* **Backup power generators** and electricians on standby to hook up polling sites in the event of an outage, as well as **backup paper poll books** and provisional ballots.
  - *Post-Election:* **Dedicated security details** for key election officials during the highly sensitive vote tabulation and canvassing periods.
- **Nice to Have:**
  - *Pre-Election:* **Rapid-response contracts** in place for emergency facility barricading, board-up services, or fencing to harden soft targets against civil unrest.
  - *Election Day:* “Voter Coach” **mobile voting units** that can be quickly dispatched to areas where a polling place has failed.
  - *Post-Election:* **Pre-contracted HAZMAT cleanup crews** on call for incidents involving suspicious substances or white powder letters targeting mail processing rooms.

Consequences That Will Require Changes to Your Initial Election Plan

- **Polling Place Needs to Move:** Severe weather (e.g., flash flooding, tornadoes, earthquake) or active physical threats (e.g., active shooters, bomb threats, swatting, flash bombs) can render a facility unsafe.

  Change required: The rapid activation of pre-identified alternate voting locations, deployment of mobile voting units, and coordinated emergency messaging (e.g., Wireless Emergency Alerts) to redirect voters.

- **Retrieving Ballots from an Unsafe Environment:** Arson at a drop box, a hazardous materials spill, or a compromised central counting facility put critical election materials at risk.

  Change required: Activating a joint task force (e.g., Fire Department, HAZMAT teams, Law Enforcement, and Election Officials) to safely extract, decontaminate, and maintain the legal chain of custody of the ballots.

- **Power Loss or Widespread Internet Outage:** A localized utility failure or a coordinated cyber or distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack could sever access to electronic poll books and the state voter registration database.

  Change required: Immediate deployment of backup generators, a shift to offline operations (using paper backups and provisional ballots), and triggering the jurisdiction's cyber incident response playbook.

Election Coordination Structure and Meeting Cadence Using the Election Incident Action Plan

The Election Incident Action Plan (IAP) serves as the foundational coordination document for all election-related stakeholder engagement across the full election lifecycle. Rather than existing as a static plan, the IAP functions as the operational anchor for structured, recurring coordination between election officials, emergency management, and supporting partners. As described in the Coordinated Structure module, this coordination is intentionally co-led: election officials and emergency management jointly determine the coordination structure, the cadence of coordination meetings, the stakeholder participation model, the process for updating and maintaining the Election IAP, and the mechanism for tracking actions, decisions, and follow-ups. Emergency management typically supports the structuring of coordination processes, while election officials provide election-specific operational requirements, legal constraints, and procedural context.

Establishing the Election Coordination Structure

Jurisdictions should establish a scalable coordination structure that aligns with their size, risk profile, and election complexity. While each jurisdiction will define its own model, the coordination structure generally includes:

- A core coordination group led jointly by Elections and Emergency Management
- A broader set of supporting stakeholders activated based on need and phase
- A defined mechanism for decision-making, escalation, and issue resolution
- A process for integrating intelligence, operational updates, and resource requests into the Election IAP

The coordination structure should be explicitly designed around the election lifecycle, ensuring continuity of engagement across all phases rather than ad hoc engagement.

Emergency management organizations utilize the **National Incident Management System (NIMS)** to coordinate incidents ranging from localized emergencies to large-scale disasters. Under NIMS, the **Incident Command System (ICS)** provides a standardized structure for managing on-scene operations, while an **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)** supports incident coordination, information sharing, resource management, and policy-level decision support. During significant events such as severe weather, power outages, cyber incidents, civil disturbances, or other disruptions that could affect election operations, election officials may coordinate closely with emergency management personnel through established ICS and EOC processes. Election officials retain responsibility for election administration and election-related decisions, while emergency management organizations facilitate coordination among responding agencies, support situational awareness, and help mobilize resources when needed. Understanding these structures enables election officials to effectively integrate into community-wide incident management efforts and leverage existing coordination mechanisms during emergencies impacting election operations.

Related to coordination structures, understanding the specific facilities used to support emergency or continuity operations is important as well. Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) serve as the primary coordination hub for managing information, resources, and interagency collaboration during significant incidents and planned events. Many emergency management organizations activate EOCs during severe weather events, major public gatherings, infrastructure disruptions, public safety incidents, and other situations that may affect community operations. Election officials should establish relationships with local emergency management organizations before an election and understand how to engage with the EOC when activated. Through the EOC, election officials can share situational awareness, coordinate resource requests, communicate operational impacts, access subject matter expertise, and receive support from partner agencies. Integrating election operations into existing EOC coordination processes helps ensure election-related issues are incorporated into broader community response activities while allowing election officials to maintain authority over election administration and decision-making.

Election officials should view the EOC as a force multiplier rather than an emergency-only resource. Even when no incident has occurred, relationships established through the EOC provide access to planning support, stakeholder coordination, communications networks, and resource coordination capabilities that can significantly enhance election preparedness and resilience.

Election Lifecycle Coordination Phases

The coordination structure should be intentionally organized around three operational phases:

1. PRE-ELECTION COORDINATION PHASE

Focus: Preparedness, planning, capability building, and validation of readiness.

Activities include:

- Establishing and validating the Election Incident Action Plan
- Confirming stakeholder roles and responsibilities
- Reviewing identified hazards and consequences
- Confirming resource availability and gaps

- Conducting planning discussions and preparedness updates
- Integrating intelligence and situational awareness updates
- Identifying and resolving operational risks prior to Election Day

2. ELECTION DAY COORDINATION PHASE

Focus: Real-time situational awareness, operational continuity, and rapid consequence management.

Activities include:

- Monitoring operational status across voting locations
- Tracking incidents, disruptions, and emerging issues
- Coordinating response actions across agencies
- Managing consequence-based decision-making (e.g., relocations, closures, contingencies)
- Maintaining public information coordination
- Updating the Election IAP in near real-time as conditions change

3. POST-ELECTION COORDINATION PHASE

Focus: Recovery, certification support, after-action coordination, and continuity of operations.

Activities include:

- Monitoring ballot processing and canvassing operations
- Addressing post-election incidents or disruptions
- Supporting chain-of-custody and secure storage operations
- Coordinating resource demobilization and sustainment needs
- Conducting after-action review inputs and corrective action tracking
- Capturing lessons learned for incorporation into future Election IAP updates

Election Incident Action Plan as the Coordination Backbone

All coordination meetings should use the Election Incident Action Plan as the single shared operating framework and agenda, ensuring consistency across all stakeholders and keeping discussions operationally focused and directly tied to documented objectives, tasks, and consequences.

Each meeting should use the IAP to:

- Review current operational objectives
- Assess progress on assigned tasks
- Identify new or emerging consequences

- Update stakeholder responsibilities as needed
- Track resource needs and availability
- Capture decisions and operational changes
- Assign follow-up actions with clear ownership
- Update the next iteration of the IAP

Scalability and Jurisdictional Flexibility

Each jurisdiction retains full flexibility to design a coordination structure that aligns with its governance, legal authorities, and operational capacity. Some jurisdictions may operate through formal Emergency Operations Center-style coordination groups, while others may utilize lighter coordination models depending on scale. Regardless of structure, the essential requirement is that coordination between election officials and emergency management is continuous, intentional, documented, and anchored in a shared Election Incident Action Plan.

Core Principle

The effectiveness of election coordination is not defined by the number of meetings or the formality of the structure, but by the degree to which election officials and emergency management professionals are able to:

- Share a common operating picture
- Coordinate decisions in real time
- Manage consequences collaboratively
- Maintain a continuously updated Election Incident Action Plan
- Sustain operational alignment across all phases of the election lifecycle

Resources

The resources for this module are collected in the Resource Library at the end of this Playbook. Relevant groups:

→ FEMA frameworks and standards `#lib-fema`

→ Continuity and contingency planning `#lib-continuity`

→ Communications `#lib-comms`

09 MODULE

Training, Exercises, and Continuous Improvement

Exercises are where plans meet the people who will have to use them.

Building Readiness Through Training and Exercises

Preparedness cannot be achieved through planning alone. While plans provide a framework for addressing potential disruptions, organizations must regularly train personnel, validate procedures, and assess capabilities to ensure plans will function effectively during real-world events. For election officials, training and exercises provide valuable opportunities to strengthen preparedness, improve coordination with partners, identify capability gaps, and build confidence in the ability to respond to and recover from disruptions affecting election operations.

Emergency management organizations routinely utilize training and exercises as part of a continuous preparedness cycle. Election officials are encouraged to adopt a similar approach and conduct regular preparedness activities throughout the election cycle. Training and exercise activities should focus on validating plans, strengthening partnerships, improving decision-making, testing coordination procedures, and identifying opportunities for improvement before an actual incident occurs.

Training and exercises should be viewed as opportunities to learn and improve rather than evaluate individual performance. The ultimate goal is to increase election resilience and ensure the continuity of election operations under a variety of conditions.

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) provides a nationally recognized doctrine and methodology for designing, conducting, evaluating, and improving exercises. Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), HSEEP promotes a consistent approach to preparedness activities and is widely used by emergency management organizations across all levels of government.

HSEEP emphasizes:

- Capability-based planning
- Clearly defined exercise objectives
- Progressive exercise design
- Participant collaboration
- Structured evaluation
- Continuous improvement

Election officials are encouraged to incorporate HSEEP principles into their preparedness activities and coordinate with emergency management partners who routinely utilize this methodology.

Progressive Exercise Planning

Exercise programs should progressively build capabilities over time. Organizations are encouraged to begin with discussion-based activities and gradually progress toward more complex operations-based exercises as plans, partnerships, and capabilities mature.

A progressive exercise program may include:

Seminars

Seminars provide introductory training and awareness-building opportunities. These sessions are often used to familiarize participants with election preparedness concepts, plans, partner organizations, roles, responsibilities, and operational procedures.

Seminars are particularly valuable when introducing election officials to emergency management partners, Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), continuity planning concepts, or incident management processes.

Workshops

Workshops allow participants to collaborate on the development, review, or improvement of plans, procedures, and preparedness activities. Examples include:

- Continuity planning workshops
- Polling place contingency planning
- Communications planning
- Resource coordination planning
- Election incident response planning

Workshops often produce tangible planning products and help establish a common understanding among stakeholders.

Tabletop Exercises (TTXs)

Tabletop Exercises are facilitated discussions that allow participants to examine plans, policies, and decision-making processes within a low-stress environment.

Participants discuss their actions in response to a simulated scenario while exploring coordination requirements, resource needs, and response options. Common election-related tabletop topics may include:

- Severe weather affecting polling locations
- Cybersecurity incidents

- Power outages
- Communications disruptions
- Civil disturbances
- Election false information campaigns
- Facility emergencies

Tabletop exercises are often the most effective and efficient preparedness activity for election officials and should be conducted regularly throughout the election cycle.

Functional Exercises

Functional Exercises test coordination, communication, information sharing, and decision-making processes in a simulated operational environment. These exercises typically involve:

- Emergency Operations Center activities
- Incident coordination procedures
- Resource request processes
- Public information coordination
- Situation reporting

Functional exercises allow election officials and emergency management partners to practice operational coordination without deploying field resources.

Full-Scale Exercises

Full-Scale Exercises represent the most complex level of exercise activity and involve the deployment of personnel and resources in a realistic operational environment. Examples may include:

- Establishing alternate polling locations
- Simulating polling place relocations
- Conducting emergency communications activities
- Activating continuity procedures
- Coordinating response operations through an EOC

Full-Scale Exercises are typically conducted when organizations seek to validate mature plans and capabilities under realistic conditions.

Multi-Agency Participation

Election preparedness is strengthened when exercises include the organizations that would be involved during an actual incident. Exercises provide an opportunity to establish relationships, clarify responsibilities, and strengthen coordination before emergencies occur. Depending on the scenario, participating organizations may include:

- Election officials
- Emergency management organizations
- Law enforcement agencies
- Fire and EMS agencies
- Information technology and cybersecurity personnel
- Public information officers
- Public works departments
- Utility providers
- School systems
- Facility owners
- State election offices
- Community partners

Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning

Every exercise should include an evaluation process designed to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Following an exercise, participating organizations should conduct a structured review that examines:

- What worked well
- Areas requiring improvement
- Resource gaps
- Coordination challenges
- Training needs
- Planning deficiencies

Documenting lessons learned is only the first step. Participating organizations should develop improvement plans that assign responsibilities, establish corrective actions, and track progress over time. Preparedness is strengthened when lessons learned are incorporated into future planning, training, and exercise activities.

Recommended Annual Exercise Cycle

Election officials should consider establishing a recurring preparedness cycle that includes training and exercise activities throughout the year. A sample annual cycle may include:

1. Review threats, hazards, and risks.
2. Update plans and procedures.
3. Conduct stakeholder coordination meetings.
4. Deliver awareness and preparedness training.
5. Facilitate workshops and tabletop exercises.
6. Conduct functional or operational exercises as appropriate.
7. Support election operations.
8. Conduct after-action reviews and improvement planning.

This cycle promotes continuous improvement and ensures preparedness activities remain aligned with changing risks, operational requirements, and lessons learned.

Best Practice

Election officials should collaborate with their local and state emergency management organizations when developing exercise programs. Emergency management personnel often possess significant experience in exercise design, facilitation, evaluation, and improvement planning and can provide valuable support throughout the preparedness process. Leveraging established emergency management training and exercise programs can reduce planning burdens, improve realism, strengthen partnerships, and help ensure election preparedness efforts are aligned with nationally recognized preparedness doctrine and best practices.

> **The most successful election preparedness programs do not wait until weeks before an election to exercise their plans. They build readiness through a progressive, year-round program of training, workshops, tabletop exercises, operational coordination activities, and continuous improvement efforts.**

Strong partnerships established through regular preparedness activities often prove just as important as the plans themselves when responding to real-world incidents.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Partner organizations can help

No jurisdiction has to build an exercise program alone. The partner organizations behind this Playbook are available to support exercise design, facilitation, evaluation, and after-action reporting, scaled to the size of your office and the capacity you have to spare. That support can start with something as small as reviewing a scenario you have already drafted.

Email support@readyfortuesday.com

Resources

The resources for this module are collected in the Resource Library at the end of this Playbook. Relevant groups:

→ Exercises and tabletop scenarios `#lib-exercises`

→ FEMA frameworks and standards `#lib-fema`

10 MODULE

Resource Library

The following resources provide additional information, guidance, frameworks, templates, and best practices related to stakeholder coordination, roles and responsibilities, election preparedness partnerships, election security, continuity, and emergency management. Jurisdictions are encouraged to leverage these resources to further develop their understanding of the concepts discussed in the modules above.

FEMA frameworks and standards

Nationally recognized frameworks referenced throughout this Playbook.

FEMA National Incident Management System (NIMS) https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims

NIMS provides nationally recognized concepts and principles related to stakeholder coordination, roles and responsibilities, resource management, and multi-agency collaboration.

- Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS)
- Unified Coordination
- Resource Management
- Information Management
- Incident Management Principles

FEMA National Preparedness System https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/system

The National Preparedness System provides guidance regarding preparedness planning, stakeholder engagement, capability assessment, and whole-community preparedness.

- Whole Community Preparedness
- Capability-Based Planning
- Stakeholder Integration
- Preparedness Assessment

FEMA Incident Action Planning (IAP) Guidance https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_incident-action-planning-process.pdf

Provides structure for building and maintaining operational objectives, task tracking, and coordination cycles within a living action planning framework.

FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) Forms Library (ICS 201–214) https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/icsforms/

Practical templates that can be adapted for election coordination tracking, staffing, communications planning, and operational status reporting.

FEMA Community Lifelines Implementation Toolkit https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/lifelines-toolkit

Supports consequence-based operational thinking by identifying functional impacts such as safety, communications, and transportation, rather than hazard-specific responses.

FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_npd_developing-and-maintaining-emergency_052125.pdf

CPG 101 provides guidelines on developing emergency operations plans and promotes a common understanding of the fundamentals of community-based, risk-informed planning and decision making to help planners examine threats or hazards and produce integrated, coordinated and synchronized plans.

FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 201: Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) Guide https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/goal/risk-capability-assessment

CPG 201 provides guidance for conducting a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR).

FEMA Local Elected and Appointed Officials Guide https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_local-elected-officials-checklists_2022.pdf

The document and associated quick reference guide and checklist provide an executive-level introduction to emergency management concepts and principles for local senior officials and identifies local senior officials' roles and responsibilities for emergency management before, during and after disasters.

Election security and information sharing –

Election Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) https://www.cisecurity.org/ei-isac

EI-ISAC provides election-specific information-sharing resources and guidance that can help election officials and partners better understand election security roles, responsibilities, and stakeholder engagement.

- Election security best practices
- Threat reporting guidance
- Cybersecurity awareness resources
- Election incident reporting resources
- Election stakeholder information-sharing products

CISA Election Security Resource Library https://www.cisa.gov/topics/election-security

Election security resources and guidance for election officials.

State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers

Fusion Centers often publish publicly available resources on threat reporting, suspicious activity reporting, information-sharing processes, infrastructure protection, and stakeholder coordination. Jurisdictions should review resources published by their respective state or regional Fusion Center.

EAC Election Security Assessment tool https://www.eac.gov/app/esa/

Risk assessment tool for election offices.

Election Security Exchange — It Starts with a Team: Building Your Election Security Working Group https://securingelections.org/it-starts-with-a-team-building-your-election-security-working-group/

How election officials can establish and maintain an Election Security Working Group by uniting cyber, physical, and operational security partners to foster collaboration, share information, and strengthen incident response throughout the entire election cycle.

Associations, contacts, and stakeholder mapping –

National associations that support peer learning, best-practice development, and regional coordination across both sectors.

National Association of State Election Directors (NASED) https://www.nased.org/

National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) https://www.nass.org/

Election Center (National Association of Election Officials) https://electioncenter.org/

Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ) https://taketheplej.org/

International Association of Government Officials (iGO) https://iaogo.org/

National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) https://nemaweb.org/

International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) https://www.iaem.org/

Big City Emergency Managers (BCEM) https://bigcityem.org/

The Council of State Governments https://www.csg.org/

State-level coordination frameworks.

EAC Election Administrator Competencies Wheel https://www.eac.gov/blogs/eac-providing-valuable-support-election-officials-voters-ahead-2020-elections

Illustrates the range of responsibilities an election office carries and the partners it coordinates with. The wheel graphic is linked in the second paragraph of this EAC post.

Continuity and contingency planning –

Ready for Tuesday — Elections Resiliency Plan Template and Assessment https://readyfortuesday.com/ready-to-use/ready-for-resilience/

A comprehensive toolkit for building MEFs (mission-essential functions), Go-Kits, and continuity plans specific to election offices.

PEER — Partnership for Elections and Emergency Response https://electionreadiness.org/

Frameworks for consequence management and integrating election officials seamlessly with emergency management agencies.

EAC Continuity of Operations Planning https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/contingency-planning

Contingency and continuity planning hub for election officials.

EAC COOP Template and Guidance (PDF) https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/EAC_COOP_Template_Guidance_Final_508.pdf

Forms and structures for delegating authority, succession planning, and capturing situational reports (SITREPs) during an emergency.

EAC Six Tips for Contingency and Disaster Planning (PDF) https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/28/EAC_6TipsForContingencyandDisasterPlanning_508_HiRes.pdf

EAC Disaster Preparedness and Recovery https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/disaster-preparedness-and-recovery-2019

Panel with presentations from election officials.

Montana Secretary of State contingency plan template https://share.google/x8cXVM50txFOS9BgU

The Elections Group — Chain of Custody Report (PDF) https://electionsgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Chain-of-Custody-Report.pdf

Ballot custody practices.

NCSL — Election Emergencies https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-emergencies

State laws governing election emergencies.

Voting Rights Lab — State of Emergency: Ensuring Accessible Elections Post-Disaster https://votingrightslab.org/report/state-of-emergency-ensuring-accessible-elections-post-disaster/

State laws and post-disaster election access.

Exercises and tabletop scenarios –

FEMA Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep

The national doctrine and methodology for designing, conducting, evaluating, and improving exercises, referenced throughout the Training, Exercises, and Continuous Improvement module.

EAC Election Scenario Test Deck https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/contingency-planning/TESTD

EAC Tabletop Exercise scenario cards — elections (PDF) https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/EAC_TTX_Cards_FINAL_Scenario_Front_ai_2.pdf

EAC Tabletop Exercise scenario cards — natural disaster expansion pack (PDF) https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2026-02/EAC_TTX_Cards_FINAL_Scenario_ND_Front_ai_508.pdf

Communications

EAC Clearinghouse Resources on Communications https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/clearinghouse-resources-communications

Crisis Communication Toolkit https://electionexcellence.org/resources/crisis-communications-toolkit/

NEMA — An Elected Official's Guide to Emergency Management https://nemaweb.org/

NEMA — Social Media Crisis Management (PDF) https://nemaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/01-10-2024-CNA-Crisis-Communications-Best-Practices-Presentation-for-NEMA-ASTHO-GHSAC-Meeting.pdf

What Is a PACE Plan (video) https://youtu.be/65o5M_QuthM?si=RkSln7wLyUuZyNe-

CISA — Election Infrastructure Incident Response Communications Guide https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/election-infrastructure-incident-response-communications-guide

Templates and instructions to support effective and accurate public messaging during an incident or relocation.

FEMA Preparedness Toolkit — Joint Information System https://preptoolkit.fema.gov/web/nims-toolkit/jis

The Joint Information System (JIS) Toolkit provides the community with a compilation of guidance, resources, and templates from various leading JIS organizations.

Ready for Tuesday — Communication about List Maintenance (Voter Rolls) https://readyfortuesday.com/ready-to-use/ready-for-list-maintenance/

Ready.gov — Emergency Communications in Your Language https://www.ready.gov/ready-your-language

Calendars and timelines –

The Elections Group — Election Management Calendar https://electionsgroup.com/resource/election-management-calendar/

An Excel-based planning tool for assigning, tracking, and managing election tasks across the full election cycle, with a companion guide for customization.

CORE Playbook — Election Readiness Deadline Calculator (XLSX) https://readyfortuesday.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/election-readiness-deadline-calculator-1.xlsx

Spreadsheet version of the interactive calculator in the Calendar and Timeline module. Enter your election date and the milestone dates populate.

EAC Quick Start Guide for Developing an Election Calendar https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/QuickStartGuides/Election_Calendar_EAC_Quick_Start_Guide_508.pdf

A concise reference covering how to build an election calendar that incorporates statutory deadlines, staff task assignments, and internal planning timelines.

Collaborative governance and community resilience –

ICMA — Local Government Collaborative Governance resources https://icma.org/resources-1

Bridging Divides Initiative https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/

Community coordination and resilience resources.

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