



# Election Disaster and Contingency Planning

Montana Secretary of State

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*Disaster and contingency planning is a vital tool in the election day planning process. Each county election administrator should have a disaster and contingency plan on file. Following is an outline to be used as a tool to help prepare a plan.*

1. Identify potential types of disasters and/or contingencies, and draft a plan for each potential disaster:
  - a. Natural Disaster (snow/ice, flooding, tornado, fire, etc.)
  - b. Health-Related Disaster (influenza outbreak, etc.)
  - c. Unexpected Poll Worker Shortage
  - d. Shortage of Ballots or other Critical Supplies
  - e. Phone System Crash
  - f. Bomb Threat
  - g. Power Failure (election office, polling place, etc.)
  - h. Internet Connection Problem
  - i. Other
2. Develop and put in writing a line of succession for staffing the election office.
3. Designate staff responsible for each task in the event of a disaster or contingency.
4. Identify agencies that can assist with a disaster or contingency.
  - a. Create a list of key contact people for any identified agencies.
5. Compile emergency contact information to include key personnel and after hours contact information for:
  - a. Disaster and Emergency Services
  - b. Law enforcement
  - c. Fire department
  - d. Phone company
  - e. Internet provider
  - f. Health department
  - g. State election office
6. See "Polling Place Relocation Checklist" form (attached) if you need to do an emergency relocation of a polling place.
7. Sample Plan is attached – note: sample plan does not include every possible disaster and/or contingency.



## Polling Place Relocation Procedures Checklist

Chief election judge or polling place manager will use this checklist in the event of an emergency that requires relocation of the polling place. This checklist is a sample only. Please modify as necessary for county-specific procedures.

FOR USE BY CHIEF ELECTION JUDGE OR POLLING PLACE MANAGER AT POLLING PLACE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

### 1. Is there an immediate threat to the safety of voters and election judges?

If so, evacuate voters and judges, then call 911 immediately.

### 2. If there is not an immediate safety threat:

- Contact the County Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator at (insert phone number): \_\_\_\_\_
- Evacuate voters in a calm manner. Let voters who have a ballot finish voting, unless threat is imminent
- Seal and secure ballots for transport
- Before you turn off voting machines, note the number of ballots on each machine so that the number can be verified at the new location
- Secure voting equipment and prepare for transport
- Transport equipment and supplies to your designated relocation area using bi-partisan teams of judges
- Post Polling Place Relocation Signs where they are easily visible at evacuated polling place
- Set up machines, ballots and other supplies at the new polling place
- Verify that seals on equipment and ballot boxes are intact
- After voting machines are turned on, verify that the number of ballots on each machine is the same. New "zero" tapes are not required
- Resume voting as quickly as possible
- Contact the County Clerk/Election Administrator when relocation is complete

## SAMPLE PLAN – Please adapt to individual county needs

Disaster/Contingency Scenarios	Task List	Staff Responsible for Task	Assisting Agency(s)	Emergency Contact	After Hours Contact
<b>Natural Disaster</b>	Provide transportation to critical staff  Provide Power  Provide Internet service if possible  Provide phone service/forwarding  Provide PC desktop access to critical staff  Communication to Public				
<b>Health-Related Disaster</b>	Set up protocol for polling places.  Contact public health department  Publish/post warning notices to public  Communication to Public	Election Administrator  Election Administrator  Election Staff	DES  Public Health  NA	John Doe 444-5555  NA	John Doe 433-5111  NA
<b>Poll Worker Shortage</b>	Call back-up poll workers  Instructions to poll workers who may be short-staffed	Deputy Election Administrator  Election Administrator			
<b>Ballot/Supply Shortage</b>	Contact election administrator  Copy sufficient number of ballots; hand-number; give voting instructions to poll workers (must vote and tabulate by hand, etc.)  Amend ballot reports to indicate additional ballots	Chief Election Judge  Election Administrator  Election Administrator			

<b>Phone System Crash</b>	<p>Notify phone service provider</p> <p>Notify Secretary of State elections</p> <p>Notify public</p> <p>Provide cell phones if applicable</p>	<p>Deputy Election Administrator</p> <p>Election Administrator (use cell)</p>			
<b>Bomb Threat</b>	<p>Clear election office/polling place if imminent</p> <p>Contact law enforcement</p> <p>Communication to Public if necessary</p>	<p>Law Enforcement or Chief Election Judge</p> <p>Election Administrator or Chief Election Judge</p>			
<b>Power Failure</b>	<p>Contact election administrator</p> <p>Contact SOS election office</p> <p>Contact power service provider</p> <p>Instructions for poll workers on how to vote manually</p> <p>Plan for registering voters and issuing ballots manually</p> <p>Plan for tabulation of ballots</p>	<p>Chief Election Judge</p> <p>Election Administrator</p>			
<b>Internet Problem</b>	<p>Contact SOS Elections division</p> <p>Contact internet service provider</p> <p>Plan for registering voters and issuing ballots manually</p>	<p>Election Administrator</p> <p>County IT Manager</p> <p>Election Administrator</p>			

## Sample Disaster and Contingency Plan (cont.)

### Plan for Ballot Shortages

1. (describe procedures)

### Plan for Poll Worker Shortages

1. (describe procedures)

### **(Sample) Plan for Voter Registration and Ballot Issuance Manual Procedures in Case of Power Failure:**

In the event of an Internet and/or power failure on election day, the following procedures shall be followed for registering voters and for issuing absentee ballots:

1. Voter Registration
  - a. Voter registration forms must be accepted and any applicants must be provisionally registered until the means to verify the identification number of each applicant is available.
2. Issuing Absentee Ballots
  - a. A paper log for each precinct must be kept that includes
    - i. The name of each voter
    - ii. The ballot stub number for each voter
  - b. All ballots must be issued provisionally to new registrants who were provisionally registered (see 1. a.)
    - i. Provisional ballots can be resolved when the identification number of the applicant is verified, unless there is any other reason for the ballot to remain provisional.
  - c. Regular ballots may be issued to existing voters who are not late registering.

### **(Sample) Plan for Ballot Tabulation Procedures in the Event of a Power Failure or Failure**

In the event of a power failure or equipment failure on election day, the following procedures shall be followed for tabulation of ballots:

- Counting boards must convene at the location designated by the county election administrator at the designated time for counting of ballots by hand.
- Procedures outlined in the [Recount Guide](#) should be followed, to the extent applicable, for hand counting paper ballots.