CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Change in a voter registration and elections office is inevitable, and effective management requires election administrators to develop contingency and change management plans to respond to situations in a timely and effective manner. The goal of this chapter is to provide election officials general guidelines on how to identify, assess, and respond to events that may disrupt election and voter registration services in their local jurisdictions. The chapter addresses both contingency planning and change management as they are inextricably linked to each other and may at times be developed concurrently with each other. The goal of both these management plans is to prevent or minimize the impact of change (expected or unexpected) on election and voter registration processes, while preserving the integrity of the electoral system. The recommendations contained in this chapter should be vetted with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and relevant case law to ensure they are properly and lawfully implemented; election officials should contact their State officials when there is a question as to whether a practice is permitted or prohibited under State law.

For purposes of this discussion, contingency planning refers to the development of a management plan that addresses an election office's response to emergency and crisis situations that might arise unexpectedly. Examples of contingencies include, but are not limited to, natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, severe snow and rain storms, fires, etc.), technology disasters (e.g. power outages), political and social events (e.g. war, civil unrest, medical emergencies, etc.), and election-related emergencies (e.g. lack of poll workers or polling places, shortage of ballots or voting systems, charges of voter intimidation, etc.). Change management, on the other hand, refers to how an election office handles situations that impact how the office functions in its capacity as an election and voter registration agency; for example: changes in Federal and State laws, budget fluctuations, relocation of election office, staffing changes, agency reorganization, etc. Unlike contingencies, change management focuses on events the office is already aware of and do not rise unexpectedly.

Identifying and assessing contingencies and change factors

The first step in developing contingency and change management plans is to identify the contingencies and change factors that can impact election and voter registration practices and procedures in your particular community. This process is useful for several reasons. First, it will help you define the goal of either your contingency or change management plans. Second, it will help you to objectively assess situations and their potential impact. Finally, it provides the framework for developing and prioritizing the actions required to address a given situation.

To ensure a thorough evaluation, approach the identification and assessment process from a group perspective; for example, incorporate these topics into staff meetings or conduct regularly scheduled meetings to review existing policies and procedures. For contingency planning sessions, have the election office staff members come up with a list of worst case scenarios. Do not limit worst case scenarios to just Election Day situations; ask staff to also include contingencies that can occur during both pre and post election timeframes. Try to identify every possible irregularity that can occur in your jurisdiction. When brainstorming about change factors, consider both internal and external sources of change. For example, an internal source could be a change in staff and an external source can be a change in State law that affects current policies and practices.

CHANGE MANANGEMENT TIP: Do not wait for situations to come up before you address them. Be proactive and learn to regularly evaluate the need for change; involve staff, election workers, and other stakeholders in this process.

tip

CONTINGENCY PLANNING TIP: Do not wait for situations to come up before you address them. Be proactive and learn to regularly identify and assess contingencies; involve staff, election workers, and other stakeholders in this process.

Table 11.1 lists several examples of possible contingencies and change factors; review the list and see what other examples you can think of for each category. In addition, when you list the contingencies and change factors, begin to think of them as "goals." A goal is the general end result you would like a contingency or change management plan to achieve. It conveys the message in general, broad terms and does not specify strategies or outcomes. This will begin to provide the framework for developing your contingency and change management plans. For example:

Contingency = fire in voting system warehouse one week before Election Day
Goal = prevent fires in voting system warehouse and mitigate impact of fires on warehouse and voting system equipment

Change factor = election office is relocated
Goal = ensure all office functions continue to operate smoothly during relocation process

Once you have identified all contingencies and change factors, proceed with assessing the magnitude of impact these events can have on your office and the election and voter registration processes. This will help uncover vulnerabilities in the current system and assist in developing contingency and change management plans that may prevent an event from occurring or mitigate its impact.

To ensure consistency in the assessment process, establish basic criteria for the magnitude of impact for each contingency or change factor. A basic format to follow initially would be to use "low impact," "medium impact," and "high impact" categories, and for each of these levels develop an explanation or definition of what each one entails. For example:

★ **LOW =** *impact of event does not significantly disrupt the election process; does not require significant resources (internal or external); does not require immediate attention; does not require revision of existing policies or procedures*

★ **MEDIUM =** *requires attention of the election office; response needed within a reasonable timeframe; can be handled internally or with minimal external resources; may require revision of existing policies or procedures*

★ **HIGH =** *event causes a state of emergency; requires immediate attention; threatens the integrity of the election process; significant resources required, both internal and external; requires revision of existing policies or procedures*

TABLE 11.1: EXAMPLES OF CONTINGENCIES AND CHANGE FACTORS

Contingencies	Change Factors
Fire in voting system warehouse	Election office is relocated
Severe snow storm (blizzard) on Election Day	Reduction in number of staff members
Electrical damage to office computers during peak voter registration weeks prior to election	Purchase of new voting system
Poll workers do not show up at their assigned polling place	New State law requires poll workers receive 8 hours of training prior to an election
Polling place runs out of provisional ballots	Office budget is reduced by 7%

The above model is generic and meant to serve as a source of ideas for how to assess the level of impact changes can have in elections.[1] However, using this model as an example, one can begin to understand the level of risk a contingency poses to an election office and how a change factor may impact the current environment. Most contingencies will fall in the medium to high categories by their nature, while change factors can vary from low to high. In order to determine the level of impact, begin by asking questions to clarify the situation (Table 11.2) and then determine the level of impact. These will also become the building blocks for the action steps you develop later in your contingency plan.

In contingency planning there is an additional step in the assessment process that needs to be taken into account – determining the likelihood of an event happening. For example, if earthquakes are listed as a contingency one would need to evaluate the probability of such an event occurring in one's local jurisdiction. If the jurisdiction has no history of earthquakes, then the likelihood of the event is low and the priority for developing a contingency plan would rank low as well. However, if the jurisdiction does have a history of earthquakes then a contingency plan for such an event would be considered a high priority. Determining the likelihood of an event is important because it helps agencies prioritize contingencies and the resources they require.

Following the example for assessing the magnitude of impact, develop definitions for the likelihood of an event occurring. We have used the "low," "medium," and "high" categories once more to simplify the process:

TABLE 11.2: ASSESSING MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT

Contingencies	Factors to Consider	Magnitude of Impact
Fire in voting system warehouse	What was the extent of the damage? How many voting systems are not functional as a result of the fire? What backup systems do we have that can be immediately put on the field?	Medium to High
Severe snow storm (blizzard) on Election Day	How accessible are the roads leading to the polling places? How long will the severe weather last? Can polling places be relocated to more accessible locations? Has a state of emergency been declared by the State?	High
Change Factors	**Factors to Consider**	**Magnitude of Impact**
Election office is relocated	Is the new facility accessible by public transportation? Is the space small, large, or the same in size to the previous location? Where and how will supplies be stored?	Low to Medium
Reduction in number of staff members	Is the reduction permanent? How will responsibilities be divided among the remaining staff?	Low to Medium

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[1] The concepts for "magnitude of impact" and "likelihood of event" are modeled on risk assessment strategies found in the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Risk Management Guide for Information Technology Systems (special publication 800-30). See Resources section at the end of this chapter for full citation.

★ **LOW** = *likelihood of event occurring is low, threat is negligible; policies and procedures are in place to prevent the event or mitigate the magnitude of impact*

★ **MEDIUM** = *likelihood of event is likely but uncertain; policies and procedures are in place that may prevent the event or mitigate the magnitude of the impact*

★ **HIGH** = *event is highly probable; policies and procedure are not in place to prevent the event or mitigate the magnitude of impact*

> ## tip
>
> Another tool you can use during the identification and assessment process to supplement (not replace) the evaluation, in either contingency or change management planning, is to conduct an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T. analysis) that can assist or impede the successful development and implementation of the identified change or contingency plan. A sample S.W.O.T. analysis worksheet can be found at the end of this chapter.

For example:

Contingency	Likelihood	Factors to consider	Magnitude of impact
Polling place runs out of provisional ballots	Medium	Voter turnout is not predictable; evaluate public interest in contests and issues on the ballots; availability of backup provisional ballots; time it takes to deliver new supply of ballots to each polling place	Medium to High

Identifying and assessing the contingencies and change factors that can or will impact your election office are the initial steps required to develop sound contingency and change management plans. They provide the foundation for determining the resources and plan of actions required to address situations in a timely and effective manner. The following two sections will separately address how to develop and implement contingency and change management plans for your election office, and they will address some of the ideas already explored in this chapter.

Developing and implementing contingency plans

The following five steps describe the general process for developing and implementing a contingency plan:

1. Set a goal
2. Define the purpose
3. Specify objectives
4. Develop an action plan
5. Implement action plan

1. Set a goal

In the previous section of this chapter, the concept of developing a goal was briefly mentioned. The following example was given:

★ **Contingency =** fire in voting system warehouse

★ **Goals =** prevent fires in voting system warehouse and mitigate impact of fires on warehouse and voting system equipment

As you can see, a goal is the general end result you would like a contingency plan to achieve. It conveys the message in general, broad terms and does not specify strategies or outcomes. In addition, the goal of the contingency plan should be in alignment with the overall mission and goal(s) of the agency. In other words, the outcome(s) of the contingency plan help support and achieve the agency's strategic plan.[2] It is also important to note that agencies may develop a strategic plan for their contingency planning program in general, which would include its own goal(s) and objectives. If so, contingency-specific plans would help support and achieve the mission and goal(s) of both the program and the agency's strategic plans.

Some examples of a contingency planning *program's* goals could be:

★ To provide prompt and effective responses to emergencies and crisis situations while preserving the integrity, transparency, and accessibility of the election process.

★ The prevention or minimization of any interruption in the election processes during emergency and crisis situations.

★ To ensure rapid and complete recovery of the election processes to normal conditions following emergencies/disasters.

★ Serve as a model agency in the area of emergency and crisis recovery.

Here is another example of a goal for a contingency-specific plan:

★ **Contingency =** poll workers do not show up at their assigned polling place

★ **Goal =** ensure polling places are fully staffed throughout Election Day

2. Define the purpose

Now that you have set a general goal, define the purpose of the contingency plan. The purpose refers to the scope (i.e. parameters, authority) of the contingency plan. It gives the plan a specific framework in which to operate, giving it focus. For example:

★ **Contingency =** fire in voting system warehouse

★ **Goals =** prevent fires in voting system warehouse and mitigate impact of fires on warehouse and voting system equipment

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[2] Strategic planning refers to the process of comprehensive, integrative program planning that considers, at a minimum, the future of current decisions, overall policy, organizational development, and links to operational plans. [Definition from the Center for Program Evaluation, which is part of the Bureau of Justice Assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs - http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/index.html].

In addition, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) states that strategic plans "are intended to be the starting point for each agency's performance measurement efforts. Each plan must include a comprehensive mission statement based on the agency's statutory requirements, a set of outcome-related strategic goals, and a description of how the agency intends to achieve these goals. The mission statement brings the agency into focus. It explains why the agency exists, tells what it does, and describes how it does it. The strategic goals that follow are an outgrowth of this clearly stated mission. The strategic goals explain the purposes of the agency's programs and the results they are intended to achieve." [GAO. Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act. June 1996. http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gg96118.pdf]

★ **Purpose of contingency plan =** establish policies and procedures for preventing and mitigating the effects of fire on the voting system warehouse through proper fire safety practices and community collaboration

As you may note in the example above, the purpose focuses the plan on fires that occur only in the voting system warehouse; fires that occur in other places (e.g. other storage facilities, polling places, election office, etc) fall outside the scope of this contingency plan. The latter would have to be addressed in a separate contingency plan.

3. Specify objectives

Objectives refer to the specific outcomes that support and help achieve the goal(s) of the contingency plan; these should be clear, measurable, achievable, realistic, and be time-bound.

Here are some examples of possible objectives for the example we have been using regarding fires in the voting system warehouse:

★ **Contingency =** fire in voting system warehouse

★ **Goals =** prevent fires in voting system warehouse and mitigate impact of fires on warehouse and voting system equipment

★ **Purpose of contingency plan =** establish policies and procedures for preventing and mitigating the effects of fire on the voting system warehouse through proper fire safety practices and community collaboration

★ **Objectives:**

1. reduce probability of fire occurrence at least 50% by the next scheduled State/local election

2. ensure smoke detectors are operational 100% of the time

3. ensure sprinkler system is operational 100% of the time

4. mitigate impact of fires on voting system equipment

5. develop fire safety measures in collaboration with local firemen and police

6. have backup voting system in case fire destroys equipment in warehouse

7. establish policies and procedures for conducting an election with the backup voting system

8. train staff and poll workers in both regular and backup voting systems

4. Develop an action plan

You have the defined the goal, purpose, and objectives of the contingency plan – now, turn that information into an action plan. The action plan should speak to the goal and objectives you have established; each action step should relate back to a particular objective(s). The plan should also define the staff, budget, time, training needs, and resources needed to accomplish the tasks and achieve the goal. Not all action plans will look the same, some will be more complex than other according to the needs of the particular contingency being considered. In addition, if you have not brought in staff and/or outside resources to participate in the contingency planning process up to this point this is the time to do so. Establishing community partners is essential to the success of many contingency plans. The role of taskforces and community groups is discussed more in depth in Discussion Box 11.4, "Community Collaborations."

Example:

★ **Contingency =** fire in voting system warehouse

★ **Goals =** prevent fires in voting system warehouse and mitigate impact of fires on warehouse and voting system equipment

★ **Purpose of contingency plan =** establish policies and procedures for preventing and mitigating the effects of fire on the voting system warehouse through proper fire safety practices and community collaboration

★ **Objectives:**

1. reduce probability of fire occurrence at least 50% by the next scheduled State/local election

2. ensure smoke detectors are operational 100% of the time

3. ensure sprinkler system is operational 100% of the time

4. mitigate impact of fires on voting system equipment

5. develop fire safety measures in collaboration with local firemen and police

6. have backup voting system in case fire destroys equipment in warehouse

7. establish policies and procedures for conducting an election with the backup voting system

8. train staff and poll workers in both regular and backup voting systems

★ **Action steps:**

1. within 15 days of adoption of the contingency plan, meet with local fire department to assess safety of warehouse and develop policies and procedures for preventing and reducing incidents of fire and the damage caused by them *(objective #5)*

2. install smoke detectors in warehouse within 15 days of adoption of the contingency plan *(objectives #1 and #2)*

3. schedule and conduct monthly visits to the warehouse to ensure smoke detectors are operational 100% of the time *(objectives #1 and #2)*

4. schedule and conduct monthly visits to the warehouse to ensure sprinkler system is operational 100% of the time *(objectives #1 and #3)*

5. monitor smoke detectors and sprinklers once a week during the last 30 days prior to a scheduled election *(objectives #1, #2, and #3)*

6. within 30 days of adoption of the contingency plan, cover voting equipment with nonflammable material during storage at warehouse to reduce impact of fire *(objective #4)*

7. within 30 days of adoption of the contingency plan, prevent sprinkler water damage by keeping voting equipment at least 12 inches off the warehouse floor *(objective #4)*

8. within 30 days of adoption of the contingency plan, designate backup facility to store voting system equipment in case current facility becomes unsafe as result of a fire *(objective #5)*

You may find it useful to display the action steps in the form of a table to help you visualize the information and present it to others (see Table 11.3).

TABLE 11.3: SAMPLE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF ACTION STEPS

Objective: #2 = ensure smoke detectors are operational 100% of the time						
Action step	Timeline	Labor categories (Staff)	Labor units (staff time for this task)	Labor Cost	Other Costs	Specific activities
consult with local firemen to determine the number and location of smoke detectors required for warehouse	within 5 days of adoption of plan	Director	8 hours	$20/hr	mileage to and from warehouse	contact local firemen, conduct site visit to warehouse (identify quantity, type, and placement), communicate findings to staff for purchase of smoke detectors
purchase smoke detectors	within 7 days of adoption of plan	Administrative Assistant	3 hours	$12/hr	0	purchase smoke detectors per specifications, inspect and accept purchased smoke detectors, store smoke detectors until installation
install smoke detectors	within 15 days of adoption of the contingency plan	Director	4 hours	$20/hr	mileage to and from warehouse	provide smoke detectors to technicians, provide placement instructions and other necessary information for installation, inspect and approve installation, maintain record of installation, train staff responsible for monitoring smoke detectors
		Technician (installer)	8 hours	$50/hr	0	receive smoke detectors, install smoke detectors, ensure all smoke detectors are operational by end of installation
monitor smoke detectors and sprinklers once a week during the last 30 days prior to a scheduled election	once a week during the last 30 days prior to a scheduled election	2 Office Staff	not to exceed 2 hours per visit	$14/hr	mileage to and from warehouse	warehouse site visit, perform evaluation of smoke detectors, record and communicate results of visit, replace nonfunctioning smoke detectors

continued next page...

TABLE 11.3 *(cont.)*

Objective: #2 = ensure smoke detectors are operational 100% of the time						
Action step	Timeline	Labor categories *(Staff)*	Labor units *(staff time for this task)*	Labor Cost	Other Costs	Specific activities
monitor smoke detectors and sprinklers once a week during the last 30 days prior to a scheduled election	once a week during the last 30 days prior to a scheduled election	2 Office Staff	not to exceed 2 hours per visit	$14/hr	mileage to and from warehouse	warehouse site visit, perform evaluation of smoke detectors, record and communicate results of visit, replace nonfunctioning smoke detectors
schedule and conduct monthly visits to the warehouse to monitor smoke detectors during other times	monthly (other than the 30 days prior to an election)	2 Office Staff	not to exceed 2 hours per visit	$14/hr	mileage to and from warehouse	warehouse site visit, perform evaluation of smoke detectors, record and communicate results of visit, replace nonfunctioning smoke detectors

tip

Contact your State and local Department of Emergency Preparedness and request copies of existing action plans and information on available resources. These plans and resources can provide the template for developing a specific operational plan as it relates to elections, including pre-election, early voting, Election Day, and post election activities.

Additional things to consider when developing the action plan:

Coordinate a team meeting with other election officials within your own State to work together to develop a State disaster/contingency plan for local election offices. Include the following team members:

★ Election officials from small, medium and large jurisdictions, including at least one jurisdiction that manages each type of voting system deployed within your State

★ State Election Director and staff members

★ State Emergency Preparedness Director and staff members

★ Representatives from local police and fire departments

★ Media and public relations outreach representatives

★ Political party representatives

★ Agencies and groups that conduct voter education and registration efforts

★ Representatives from elderly, disabled, and language minority groups should be included to ensure contingency plans are effectively communicated and implemented in regards to these groups

★ Legal staff/representatives from the election offices and other legal organizations vested in elections to ensure contingency plans are consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local laws

Review your State election code and regulations to determine how these guidelines and laws will regulate your actions.

EXAMPLE In some States the Secretary of State has the authority to declare an Election Day emergency, thus permitting your office to implement approved "emergency election procedures".

Within your county, it is important to understand the chain of authority for local disasters. Contact your local Emergency Management Department to gather information on your countywide procedures, including powers and responsibilities of county officials, as well as procedures for managing media operations.

Once your State Plan has been drafted, each local election official should establish and meet with a local task force to include:

★ County department representatives

★ Area law enforcement and fire district agencies

★ Area school district representatives

★ Area utility staff members, etc.

The local area task force provides your office access to resources available throughout your jurisdiction in the event of an emergency. With their input and the assistance of your Emergency Management Director, begin by developing a chain of authority and decision tree, including a contact list of these individuals, with home and cell telephone numbers.

Throughout the development of your plan, consider the following questions:

★ Are there any gaps, overlaps, or other problem areas?

★ Is it detailed enough? Too detailed?

★ Does the Plan reflect lessons learned (from actual disasters or tests)?

★ Does the Plan reflect changes in the facilities or internal processes?

★ Have the types of situations changed?

★ Are names and phone numbers current?

★ Are disaster supplies stocked and ready for distribution?

tip

It is also strongly recommended that the Plan be tested on a regular basis – no less than twice a year. This helps all employees to become familiar with the procedures and reduces your risks in the event of an actual disaster.

5. Implement the plan

Now it is time to implement the action steps that you have laid out for your contingency plan. A key activity during the implementation of the plan is to EVALUATE. Once the plan has been implemented, it is important to assess how effective the action plan was and how it can be improved for the next time. It is useful to involve the staff and other teams of people involved in carrying out the steps of the action plan; they will be able to better tell you how the plan worked in actual practice. It is also as important to communicate the results of this assessment with your team and interested stakeholders; engaging them in the process will help them better understand the successes and challenges election officials face during moments of crisis.

Organizing Response Teams

A response team is comprised of designated individuals, and can include county management officials, election staff members, area police and fire staff, and specific polling place supervisors.

EXAMPLE A disaster response team is comparable to a volunteer Fire Department. The volunteer firemen are regular citizens with other jobs. They are trained as firemen and have a central meeting location (fire station), which contains all of their equipment. When a fire occurs, the alarm sounds and they leave their regular jobs, go to the central meeting location and perform firefighting duties until the fire is extinguished.

The duties of the response team can include:

★ Implement the procedures as detailed in the Disaster/Contingency Plan

★ Initiate the phone tree

★ Serve as a liaison between the response team, management, and other employees

★ Direct and supervise operations

★ Maintain and distribute disaster supplies, etc.

Each type of disaster/contingency plan should have its own unique response team. As an example, a shortage of provisional ballots in one area of the county would require the deployment of a pre-assigned team of runners who are trained to respond to specific polling places with additional ballots.

Community Collaborations

The success of a contingency plan does not rely solely on the internal resources the election office has. Many emergencies and crisis situations will require the election office to reach out to other agencies and groups in the community for assistance in managing the situation and ensuring interruptions to the election processes are prevented and/or minimized. As such, it is best to involve key stakeholders from the beginning, i.e. during the development phase of the contingency plan. There are many benefits to this, including:

★ They can be a resource of fresh and innovative ideas.

★ They can provide volunteers, materials, and services.

★ They can provide technical expertise in areas outside the scope of the election office's functions, knowledge, and capabilities.

★ It helps educate non-election staff about the roles and responsibilities of the election offices and its importance in the community.

　　Whom do you decide to involve? The response to this question will vary according to the particular issue being considered. A good way to identify stakeholders is to determine who will be impacted by the contingency plan – for example:

★ Staff from other county offices/department

★ Poll workers

★ Voters

★ Local police and fire departments

★ Emergency medical services

★ Representatives from groups serving the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and minority groups

★ Representatives from political parties

★ Voter education and outreach groups

★ Legal staff/representatives from the election offices and other legal organizations vested in elections

★ Staff from the State's election office

★ Other counties' election directors

These runners must be "on call" and be prepared to respond at a moment's notice. Supplies must be readied and may include polling place directional maps, names of polling place supervisors, official response team name tags, checklists, instructions, etc.

Organizational Planning for Catastrophic Disasters

A catastrophic disaster is an event that causes the cancellation and subsequent rescheduling of an election. This includes terrorist attacks such as the 9/11 attack in New York and natural disasters such as the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans.

★ Be sure to understand your State election law regarding declaration of emergencies, especially who has the authority to make decisions relating to the election process. Examples can include:

  • Closing and relocation of polling places

  • Consolidation of polling locations

  • Cancellation and rescheduling of an election

★ In your plan, be sure to establish a procedure for notifying all polling place supervisors that the election has been cancelled. Your action plan should also provide instructions on how to close the polling locations and return supplies. In the event that an election is cancelled, the Plan should also give guidance for the disposition of ballots and electronic media.

Creating a Media Action Plan

In order to protect and enhance the Election Office's credibility and to communicate effectively with the media, the election director should consider the following suggestions:

★ Designate an election staff member to be the central media contact person.

★ Instruct all employees to refer all questions from the media to the election director or to the County's Public Information Officer.

★ Educate your employees that news reporters are under constant deadlines, but no deadline is worth anyone releasing an inaccurate statement to the media.

★ Be aware that media reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story.

★ Educate your polling place supervisors on proper ways to handle media questions.

★ Never allow anyone to provide a "personal" or "off the record" opinion to the media.

★ Press releases should be developed and disseminated in an expeditious fashion regarding changes in election times, polling place locations, expected release of election results, etc.

★ Be sure to take time to explain to the media and the public the nature of the emergency and all procedures as you work toward managing the issue. Perceived problems can be just as damaging as actual problems. Remember to provide thorough explanations. By taking the time to inform the public as things progress, an Election Day emergency, large or small, will be thought of and reported as a problem that you accurately and efficiently handled, not an Election Day disaster.

★ The designated election PIO staff should maintain a media contact list, including office and cell telephone numbers and email addresses for all first line media personnel.

★ It is important to provide a complete listing of polling places to all area law enforcement and firefighting personnel prior to every election. Through a designated response team, area police departments can implement increased patrols and/or place law enforcement officers at specific polling place locations should they deem it necessary in order to protect public safety and the integrity of the election process.

EXAMPLE Should the national threat level be increased to orange or red on Election Day, local area police and sheriff departments would immediately implement their response team procedures.

Contingency Planning for Unexpected Events during Early Voting

Early voting activities can include distribution of ballots by mail or voting in person at satellite locations prior to Election Day. As with all other election operations, any possible unexpected event during early voting must be identified, an action plan developed, and staff trained on how to respond to the issue. Evaluate all aspects of the operation, from the moment the doors open, until they close.

NOTE Satellite early voting in-person locations are similar to polling places on Election Day. They are staffed by temporary staff, managed by a supervisor, and are open for voting during a designated period of time.

Following is a list of possible situations that can arise unexpectedly during the early voting period and some of the factors to consider when developing a contingency plan:

Computer network failure

★ If voters are processed on the main election software system, how will you check voters in if the computers stop working?

★ How will you verify their eligibility?

★ How will you know which ballot style to provide the voter?

Power outage

★ How will you process voters?

★ Do you have a UPS device or battery powered laptop for emergency use?

Staff shortage

★ Do you have designated staff identified to fill positions until replacement temporary staff can be recruited?

Ballot shortage

★ Do you have a temporary backup supply of all ballots on site at each location?

★ Are temporary staff members trained to call for additional ballots once they access the backup supply?

Long lines

★ Do you have a Plan B for managing large quantities of voters?

★ Are temporary staff members trained in line management procedures?

Incorrect ballot styles mailed to voters

★ How will you determine which voters received the wrong ballot?

★ What is your method for issuing replacement ballots?

★ How will your office respond to media questions?

Contingency Planning for Unexpected Events on Election Day

Unexpected events occur in every business operation, every day throughout the year. On Election Day, any unexpected event can have a significant impact, i.e. polling places don't open on time, poll workers don't report for work, mission critical supplies were not delivered, road closures, power failure, etc. Each scenario must be evaluated, and an action plan developed, including the assignment of a response team for each type of unexpected event.

Following is a list of possible situations that can arise unexpectedly on Election Day and some of the factors to consider when developing a contingency plan:

Relocation or consolidation of polling places

★ Maintain a listing of all available polling place locations within your jurisdiction, along with contact person name and phone number.

★ Consider using satellite early voting locations as emergency polling places on Election Day. These locations usually have computer network lines in place to allow for any voter in the jurisdiction to be validated.

★ If it is necessary to relocate polling places at the last minute, be sure to post notices at the old location to inform voters of the location of the new polling place.

★ Notify the media of any polling place changes and remember to also post this information on your office web site.

★ Use your office automated telephone system to provide updated information to voters about last minute polling place changes.

Shortage of poll workers

★ As part of your normal operating procedures, assign a certain percentage of poll workers to a "stand by" status. Require that these poll workers report to the central election office instead of a polling place on Election morning. These poll workers can be deployed to any polling place in the county in the event of "no shows" or absences.

★ Implement a county/city employee "stand by" poll worker program. These employees should receive full training and be authorized for immediate re-assignment on Election Day, if needed.

★ If not needed at the polling places, utilize this pool of "stand by" poll workers to serve other needs on Election Day, i.e. runners, in-house telephone bank staff, etc.

Shortage of ballots and/or supplies

★ Poll workers should be trained to inspect their supply kits on the day before Election Day. They are the final set of eyes to determine if all mission critical supplies have been packaged correctly.

★ Provide a checklist of all mission critical supplies. Place this checklist on the top of their supply kit and train them to check this list immediately upon receipt of their supplies. If something is missing, poll workers must be trained to immediately telephone the central election office on the night prior to Election Day.

★ Be sure that your office has an action plan in place to monitor telephone calls from poll workers on the night before Election Day, and to dispatch response teams to deliver any missing supplies.

Equipment issues

★ Provide poll workers with easy to follow, step by step instructions for opening and closing voting equipment. Make these instructions as simple as possible, placing the opening instructions on one side and the closing on the reverse side. Laminate this one page of instructions and place it in an easy to use location.

   NOTE Consider attaching the laminated instructions to the handle of the voting equipment, making it easy to find on Election morning.

★ Maintain a support help desk to answer questions from poll workers regarding any problem they have with opening or closing the voting equipment. Be sure to document each call and use this information for future debriefing sessions.

★ Provide cell phones to all rovers in the field and establish an action plan to enable the central election office to know which rovers have been dispatched to which polling place locations.

★ Require the rovers to complete a daily log documenting their visits to assigned polling locations throughout the day.

Polling place not open

★ Provide the supervisory poll worker with current contact information for the manager of the facility they are assigned to on Election Day.

★ Train poll workers to immediately contact the facility manager by phone if the location is locked and they are not able to gain access. If they are not able to reach the facility manager, they should immediately contact the central election office for assistance.

★ In the event that access to the location is not available by the time that the polls are scheduled to open, poll workers should be trained on how to implement Plan B for processing voters until the building is opened.

   NOTE Plan B can include utilizing the trunks of automobiles as check in locations for voters.

Inclement weather after the polls open

★ Develop an emergency action plan in the event that roads in your jurisdiction become either somewhat or completely impassable due to ice or snow.

★ Contact county/city employees to request use of four-wheel drive vehicles for use in collecting voting equipment and voted ballots from pre-established emergency collection sites or from individual polling place locations.

★ Utilize your established polling place notification plan to inform supervisory poll workers that the Election night emergency action plan is now in place.

   NOTE Consider implementing a central text messaging service to provide immediate notification to all poll workers through their cell phone.

Bomb threat

★ Provide a "Bomb Threat Protocol" laminated card in all polling place supply kits. Instruct your poll workers to follow the guidelines on the card and to call 911 immediately.

Power failure at polling places

★ Include instructions on how to manage a power failure in your poll worker training program and manual. These instructions should be laminated and placed in an easy to find location in their Election Day supply kit.

★ Poll workers should be trained in how to calmly continue the voting process in the event of power failure.

★ Train your staff to establish and send a response team to these polling place locations. The response team should be prepared to transport needed supplies and equipment, i.e. food, water, space heaters, fans, etc.

Electioneering or protesting

★ Train poll workers on State law regarding electioneering at the polls on Election Day. Provide poll workers with simple solutions for dealing with this issue, i.e. request voters to remove campaign buttons or stickers from their clothing, conduct periodic visual checks outside the entrance of the polling place to check for campaign signs, etc.

★ If poll workers experience difficult in managing electioneering activity, they should be trained to immediately call 911 to request police assistance.

Traffic control

★ Poll workers should be trained to be aware of potential traffic issues and be prepared to request police assistance, if necessary.

Long lines

★ In the event of long lines of voters, poll workers should be trained to follow the guidelines for line management in their training manual. Tip: Consider developing and incorporating line management guidelines into the poll worker training session and materials if you do not currently have one. Reach out to other community groups, agencies, and businesses that have experience coordinating and managing large events for their input on how they would manage a polling place.

★ Provide various scenarios as solutions to this issue, i.e. break up the line into two or more check in locations; station a poll worker at the end of the line to encourage voters to review the sample ballot and be prepared to vote in order to keep the line moving; confirm that voters are in the correct polling place location; and consider setting up a separate line to manage provisional voters.

★ Develop a plan for deploying additional personnel, voting equipment, and other supplies to polling places experiencing long lines.

TIP As a first step on Election Day, have poll workers and/or roaming technicians first explain the cause of the long lines before deploying resources; this will help you identify which personnel or materials need to be sent out or if the problem only requires a modification within the polling place.

Developing a Continuity of Operations Plan for Internal Operations

On Election Day, the central election office becomes the command post for all polling place activities throughout the jurisdiction. It is imperative to review your internal continuity of operations plan with a mindset of "It's now Election Day. What will we do if?" Consider every conceivable scenario from bomb threats to power outage to telephone malfunction. Ask yourself:

Power failure

★ What are the mission critical operations that will need electricity from an emergency source in the event of a power failure at your main office?

★ Do you have an emergency generator on stand-by on Election Day?

★ Do you have UPS devices connected to mission critical computer systems should the main power supply be interrupted for any reason?

★ Have you contacted your area utility companies to request that they limit work in your vicinity on Election Day?

Computer system issues

★ Who will you call if the main computer system crashes on Election morning?

★ How will you direct voters to the correct polling place without a computer available to lookup the information?

★ Do you have a county computer staff member on call to your office 24/7 during election mode?

Telephone system issues

★ How will you communicate to the polling places, the voters, and the media if the main telephone system malfunctions on Election morning?

★ Do you know which polling places have cell phones available to them?

★ Do you have access to all cell phones within the county organization?

★ Do you have a listing of personal cell phone numbers for your staff?

★ Have you collected cell phone numbers for your poll workers in the field?

★ Do your poll workers have an emergency contact phone number for their use on Election Day?

★ Have you made arrangements with your emergency dispatch department to manage phone calls in the event of an emergency?

★ Does your local phone company know where to reroute your calls in the event of an emergency?

Election night activities

★ Do you have an alternative location to tally votes on Election night?

★ Do you have a backup of all computer data both onsite in a fire proof safe and in an offsite secure location?

tip

Document each of these scenarios and its specific action plan. Publish and distribute your office's Internal Continuity of Operations Plan to all agencies responsible for providing assistance in the event of a disaster/emergency. You should also release the final Plan to all area television, radio, and newspaper media.

It is also recommended that there be a system and process for how poll workers and voters will communicate with the election office during the voting period in case of emergencies and other election-related events. For example: do you have dedicated telephone lines for poll workers, voters, media, etc; do you have the necessary telecommunications equipment and staffing to manage the phone lines; how have you communicated these numbers to each group; how will poll workers contact the office (agency issued cell phones, telephones already located on polling site, personal phones, etc.); etc.

Staff and Poll Worker Training and Supplies

Polling Places become mini-branch offices on Election Day. Each one is stand-alone and must be prepared to handle any situation that may arise. Many types of situations can occur during the day. Often poll workers face the challenge of managing electioneering activities, other types of protests, accidents and illnesses impacting poll workers and/or voters, traffic control needs, bomb threats, along with weather-related issues and supplies and equipment issues.

Specific Emergencies:

★ **Fire** – Poll workers should be trained to review the procedures for reporting fires and evacuating the facility with their polling place facility manager. If possible, they should collect the designated election supplies prior to leaving the building.

★ **Medical** - For any medical emergencies, poll workers should be instructed to call 911 immediately, and to also report the emergency to the central election office.

★ **Tornado** – Poll workers should seek shelter immediately if a warning is issued for their area. They should follow instructions posted in the facility and go immediately to the designated shelter area. If no shelter area is available, they should seek shelter in an interior room that does not have windows.

★ **Flood** – In the event of flooding, poll workers should immediately notify the central election office and then move the polling place supplies and voting area to a higher location.

NOTE Include large garbage bags with each polling place's supplies. In the event of heavy rain, they can be used to protect the ballot boxes and precinct supplies from moisture.

★ **Severe Ice/Snow Storm** – If poll workers are concerned about severe weather related to ice or snow, they should immediately notify the central election office.

★ **Power Failure** – Should the power fail at a polling place location, the poll workers should follow the instructions provided in their election supplies. They should also be trained to notify the central election office as soon as possible.

Other things to consider:

★ Full time election staff should be responsible for preparing and packaging all polling place supply kits. These kits should contain a checklist to be

signed by two staff members as a final proof that all supplies for each location are in place.

★ Develop a listing of all mission-critical polling place supplies. Again, this list should be double-proofed by two separate full time staff members prior to distribution to the poll workers.

★ On Election Day, poll workers should be trained to immediately notify the central election office in the event of an expected shortage of mission-critical supplies, i.e. provisional ballots, etc.

★ Runners should be available and a response team should be assigned to deliver additional supplies. The response team should be provided with driving maps and instructions on how to provide additional support to the poll workers. One member of the response team should have a cell phone to report back to election central when all supplies have been delivered.

★ Provide additional support to poll workers by assigning rovers to pre-established regions on Election Day. Each region should contain 7-10 polling places. The rovers should visit these locations before the polls open and immediately after the polls close to provide additional support and assistance to the poll workers.

RESOURCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Emergency Preparedness and Response:
  http://emergency.cdc.gov/

- Disability Preparedness Resource Center:
  http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/

- Federal Emergency Management Agency:
  http://www.fema.gov/

- Ready Campaign:
  www.ready.gov

- List of State offices and agencies of emergency management:
  http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm

- Disaster Help:
  https://www.disasterhelp.gov/index.shtm

- Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities:
  http://www.ada.gov/emergencyprep.htm

- Stoneburner, Gary, Alice Goguen, and Alexis Feringa. *Risk Management Guide for Information Technology Systems, Recommendations of the National Institute of Standards and Technology* (Special publication 800-30). National Institute of Standards and Technology, Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. July 2002. (**http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/nistpubs/800-30/sp800-30.pdf**)

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security:
  http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm

- U.S. Department of the Interior – Emergency Management
  (**http://www.doi.gov/emergency/index.html**)

- U.S. Department of Justice, Americans with Disability Act:
  http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

- *An ADA Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities.* (An 11-page illustrated publication that provides guidance on preparing for and carrying out emergency response programs in a manner that results in the services being accessible to people with disabilities.)
  (**http://www.ada.gov/emergencyprepguide.htm**)

- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section. *An ADA Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible for People with Disabilities.* (**http://www.ada.gov/emergencyprep.htm**)

- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Program, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Center for Program Evaluation:
  http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/index.html

- U.S. General Accounting Office. *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act.* June 1996.
  http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gg96118.pdf

S.W.O.T Analysis Sample Worksheet

EXAMPLE A county is considering the use of vote centers on Election Day and have decided to conduct an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that can assist or impede the successful development and implementation of this change. They are conducting the S.W.O.T. analysis as part of the overall identification and assessment process in preparation for developing and implement a contingency or change management plan.

Strengths and Weaknesses = internal factors (factors inside the office that can be an asset or an obstacle to achieving desired end result)

EXAMPLE budget, number of staff members, organizational structure, etc.

Opportunities and Threats = external factors (factors outside the office that can be an asset or an obstacle to achieving desired end result)

EXAMPLE community interest, public perception, changes in Federal/State laws, etc.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSESS
★ Office has the appropriate budget to make the change ★ Current staff is well trained and invested in the process	★ No current policies or procedures exist in the county regarding the use of vote centers ★ Current staffing level is already below what is needed – how will this change impact current staff's roles and responsibilities
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
★ Strong community approval of vote centers ★ Several locations for vote centers have been identified that: are centrally located = accessible by public transportation, easily identifiable buildings, accessible by major routes, parking space accommodates large amounts of cars, etc.have the required space (inside and outside)	★ Identified locations do not agree to participate as vote centers ★ Difficulty in recruiting qualified poll workers