EMERGENCY SITUATIONS
REQUIRING EVACUATION OF THE POLLING PLACE

Fire-Fire Drill-Bomb Threat-Flooding

Be prepared - read and familiarize your workers with these procedures

- Locate and study the posted evacuation route in your room and building
- Review evacuation route and instructions below with all election officers
- Make sure all officers and poll watchers know the location of exits

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

1. **Only if time permits…**
   - Chief Officer takes Card Activator, Activator cards, Ballot Box
   - Assistant Chief Officers takes SOR, used forms and envelopes
   - Voting Machine Officer takes paper ballots, paper and pens, pencils; writes down public counter number on each machine
   - Pollbook Officers take Pollbook Count Sheets and Pollbooks

2. Election Officers direct voters and poll watchers to nearest exits.

3. Chief designates an officer to notify the Electoral Board that an emergency exists

4. Outside the building, advise voters that (depending on the situation):
   - Voters may wait until the building can be re-entered, or
   - They may leave and return later, but before 7:00 pm or
   - Voters may vote by paper ballot, if officers were able to bring the Pollbooks and paper ballots outside
   - For those voters who had been checked in, but who had not voted on the machines and wish to return later – Chief officer will designate an officer to list names of voters who decide to leave
   - When these voters return they must be allowed go to the head of any line of persons waiting to vote.
   - If voters do not return, explain the discrepancy in Part E of the SOR.

*Remember…..* Remain calm, and follow the directions of public safety personnel.

If the building cannot be re-entered, emergency personnel will contact us and then direct you and the voters to a designated alternate location.

In the event of relocation, our office will dispatch Rovers and/or staff with extra supplies to assist you. The media will also be alerted to redirect the voters.
Shelter-in-place is a protective action to shield people from a hazardous outdoor situation or external threat such as a weather event, traffic accident involving a hazardous chemical or a sniper situation. This is intended as a short term measure to protect workers and voters until the hazard has passed.

- Locate a safe interior room (no windows) or basement inside your building.
- (Check in advance with the school officials, facility administrator or Emergency Sheet)
- Review the route to the shelter with officers, pages and poll watchers keeping in mind, that there may be little or no lighting if the power is out.
- Review the instructions below with all election officers.

**EMERGENCY SHELTER-IN-PLACE PLAN**

1. **Only if time permits…..**
   - Turn off the machines by turning the power knob to off. **Do not close the polls**! No votes will be lost.
   - Fold top down and place cover on machine. Place them in the cages.
   - Place card activator, activator cards, pollbooks, paper ballots, ballot box, SOR’s return envelopes and other forms in the cage.
   - Chief Officer locks the cage with key and keeps the key.

2. Election Officer and Pages direct voters and poll watchers to the shelter
3. Chief designates an officer to notify Electoral Board (office) that an emergency exists
4. Remain in the shelter until the emergency has passed.

**Remember…..** Remain calm, and follow the directions of public safety officials

If you cannot leave the building and voters cannot enter the building after a reasonable period of time, the Electoral Board may choose to reestablish your polling place at alternate locations using Rovers with spare machines and supplies that have been reserved for emergencies. The police will direct voters to the new location and the Electoral Board will contact the radio and TV stations to alert voters of the polling place change. After the emergency has passed and the polls have closed, the Electoral Board will work with you to reconcile and combine the votes from the two locations.

**Be prepared…**

Good things to take to a shelter if you have them: flashlight, cellular phone, transistor radio, bottled water, canned fruit drinks and snack foods.
Emergency Procedures
The best laid plans can often change upon a moment’s notice. Emergencies happen and localities need to be prepared to handle them. This checklist can be used in the preparation for and in the event of emergencies. The outcome of an emergency is often decided before it ever happens: it is determined during the preparation and training before Election Day. The best plans are of no use if they are not properly communicated to the people who need them the most. Therefore, ensure that everyone working in the polling place is aware of these procedures.

Safety Assessment for the Polling Place
As part of the normal preparation before Election Day, the Chief should conduct a safety assessment for the polling place. This assessment should include:
- Locate fire extinguishers/fire alarms and inform all election officials of their location.
- Identify emergency escape routes/exits.
- Identify a predetermined assembly point to be used in the case of evacuation at least 300 feet away from the building and outside of parking areas, if possible.
- Familiarize all officials with the Incident Report Form.
- Identify potential hazard areas (icy steps/sidewalks, slick/wet floors) and notify custodial or management staff of the polling place to correct the hazards, if possible.
- Identify dialing procedures for contacting 9-1-1 (Determine whether an outside line requires dialing additional digits such as “9” resulting in 9-9-1-1).
- Check emergency supplies: flashlight, list of important phone numbers, a copy of locality’s emergency plan...
- Make sure that the polling place has access to a phone in case of an emergency.

Emergency Evacuations
Get as accurate a headcount as possible
Alert all present individuals of the emergency circumstances as calmly as appropriate and remind them of the predetermined assembly area
Voting machine officer take quick note of the “Public Counter” number on the machine(s).
Designated officer should notify the office of the general registrar/electoral board ASAP.
Chief officer should insure that all election officials and evacuated voters are accounted for.
Chief officer should designate an officer to list the names of those who checked in before the evacuation, but were unable to vote.

Officers should advise voters they may do one of the following:
Wait until the building can be re-entered.
Vote on a paper ballot, marksense ballot or battery operated voting equipment, if officers have the materials to allow them to do so. Follow the procedures for use of emergency paper ballots if the equipment is not available or cannot be used. (§ 24.2-642.)
If time permits, polling place officials should try to take with them the following:
- Ballot container
- Precinct Pollbook(s)
- Public Counter number recorded from each machine
- Unused ballots
- Paper Ballots
- Paper
- Pens
- Necessary forms and materials to allow voting to continue, such as Affirmation of Identity and Affirmation of Eligibility, and any precinct lookup devices/lists
- Voting equipment (if feasible)
- Personal belongings

Any voter who chooses to leave because of the emergency and later returns must be allowed to go to the head of any line of persons waiting to vote. Officers should make a list for this purpose.

- However, a voter who has already been marked on the Pollbook as present to vote and then leaves may not return and vote later. At no time may the line of those who have checked in and not yet voted extend beyond of the observation of the officers. (§ 24.2-643 (B)).
- The law also says that the line may not extend outside the building or polling place (§ 24.2-643 (B)), but public safety must take priority in an emergency. So, one officer should stay with the evacuated voters who have been checked in but not yet voted, and voting should recommence (either inside the polling place or at the alternate location) as soon as it is possible and safe.
- Attempt to resume the election at the predetermined assembly point if circumstances permit.
- The electoral board may opt to move polling to another location if there will be a prolonged or permanent evacuation. Should this happen, an election official must leave directions to the new location posted on the doors (post on both regular and handicapped accessible entryways) and the time you vacated this polling place.

Fire
If the fire is very small and contained, attempt to extinguish with a fire extinguisher. Call 9-1-1.
If the fire cannot be extinguished, evacuate all voters and Election Officials using the predetermined emergency routes to the predetermined assembly point.
If evacuation is necessary, follow the above procedures.

Bomb Threat
If the threat is imminent, evacuate all voters and Election Officials from the polling place using the predetermined emergency procedures on page 1-2.
Call 9-1-1 and report everything exactly as the caller reported it to you.
Notify the general registrar’s office as soon as possible after calling 9-1-1.
The person having received the threat call should document the conversation on paper while it is fresh in their mind.
If a bomb threat is phoned into a polling place, get as much information from the caller as possible. If possible, have another person listen to the conversation. Do not be afraid to ask questions. A list of suggested questions is contained in Exhibit B.

**Power Outage**

Contact the registrar/electoral board office. The staff will attempt to get power restored or auxiliary power provided or supply additional paper ballots if they will be needed.

If possible, contact the custodial or management staff of the polling place.

Most equipment should remain operational because of battery backup.

Attempt to find an alternate source of light until power is restored.

Meanwhile, use the flashlight, if provided with the election supplies.

If it is feasible, the polling location may temporarily be moved to another area of the building where natural light is available or car headlight beams can be directed into the area.

If necessary, continue voting using paper ballots:

- Be sure to accurately reflect these voters as paper ballot voters in the Pollbook.
- Call the registrar’s office to request additional paper ballots if necessary.
- If it appears that they will not arrive before the existing supply has been depleted, procedures for making additional emergency paper ballots are provided in the §24.2-642

If power cannot be restored:

- The electoral board may opt to move polling to another location.
- An election official must leave directions to the new location posted on the doors (post on both regular and handicapped accessible entryways) and the time you vacated this polling place.

If the power goes out during the ascertainment of the results, the officers of election may not move the voting materials to an alternate location without representatives of both political parties present with the materials at all times.

**Inclement or Precarious Weather Conditions**

The staff of the electoral board and registrar should monitor reports of extreme weather conditions prior to elections.

In the case that extreme weather is predicted *before* the election:

- Arrangements must be made with the managers of the facilities where polling places are located and will be notified that they must have the facility open for polling, delivery, and pick-up of the voting equipment.
- The voting machine technicians should deliver the equipment to the polling locations ahead of schedule.

In the event that a report of dangerous conditions is received from a creditable source (School Superintendent, Sheriff’s Office, fire and emergency management officials) or an emergency weather channel while the election is being held, follow the appropriate plans:

- In the event of an earthquake, evacuate the building as described on pages 1-2 and assemble at the predetermined evacuation assembly point if possible.
In the event of a tornado, calmly assemble voters and election officials in an internal space away from windows, preferably in an enclosed hallway.

In the event of icy/snowy/treacherous walkways, assign an election official or an election page to keep entrances and exits free of ice and snow, as well as, posting multiple signs boldly indicating “caution” areas (wet floors, icy walkways, etc.). Keep the registrar apprised of present and changing conditions, as well as the steps taken to improve those conditions.

**Illness, Injury, or Death**

Have an election official call emergency service at 9-1-1.

Make sure that the election official identifies himself, gives the full address of the polling place and the name of the building, and is prepared to provide directions to the polling place and the information about the extent of the person's injury.

Do not touch the person or offer to treat or provide medications (either over the counter or otherwise) to the individual.

Complete an Incident Report Form. An Election Official may tell the person that an Incident Report is being filed with the electoral board.

Do not make any statement admitting guilt or wrongdoing, or instruct the individual on the proper course of treatment (this includes assisting the individual in getting medical care by means other than by calling 9-1-1).

In the event of a serious illness, injury, or death, call the registrar/electoral board office after completing the call to 9-1-1.

**Inability to Enter the Polling Location:**

- In the case of high water before the polls open, first notify the registrar, who will in turn contact the local electoral board. The electoral board must follow the guidelines established in the Election Emergency Procedures. After the alternate plans have been finalized, the electoral board and chief election official will notify election officials.

- In the case of high water after the polls open, first inform the registrar, follow evacuation procedures, and then follow the aforementioned high water plans.

- In the case of locked doors, if the chief election official will not have the key for the polls, he should ensure, prior to Election Day, that he has phone numbers for contacting a facility custodian or the management staff. If the chief election official cannot make contact with one of the aforementioned individuals, he should contact the registrar and begin following the guidelines set forth for an alternate polling location in the Election Emergency Plans. Section 24.2-603 of the Code of Virginia states that polls MUST be open and allowing voters to place their vote at 6:00 a.m.

**Emergencies Involving Election Officials:**

- If the chief election official does not arrive with the supplies, any election official present should notify the registrar by 5:15 a.m. The office staff will attempt to reach the chief at his home. If the chief cannot immediately get to the polls with the supplies and books, the electoral board will deliver supplies, ballots, and a machine key immediately to the polling place. Until the books (which are in the custody of the chief) arrive, the registrar’s office must be called to verify that each voter is
qualified. (If no phone service, follow the challenged voter procedures using a paper ballot and the affirmation of eligibility form.) Record each voter’s name and Pollbook count (PBC) number on a note pad until the books arrive. Once you have the books, record the voters and PBC numbers in the appropriate sections. If a voter must leave before you receive ballots, take his/her name and phone number. If the voter returns later in the day, place him/her at the front of the line, if one exists.

• If the chief election official is ill or has a family emergency before the election, the assistant chief or the official who will now serve as chief will be notified to pick up the supplies and ballots, and serve in absence of the chief.

• If the supplies are destroyed, immediately call the registrar so that new supplies may be furnished. The supplies and ballots are not to be left overnight in an automobile. The chief should ensure the supplies, equipment, and ballots are safely secured both at home and at the polling location when they go to check their equipment. If the supplies are destroyed before distribution to the chiefs, the registrar’s staff will then replace supplies.

• In the event that the precinct is short of election officials, the shortage must be reported as the chief or assistant chief becomes aware. The registrar’s office will attempt to replace the official. The other election officials must proceed in opening the polls. However, § 24.2-118 provides that, “If an officer of election is absent or unable to serve and the polls have been open for one hour, the remaining officers of election shall appoint a substitute officer of election for the precinct. The substitute officer shall possess the same qualifications and, after taking the requisite oath, have the same powers as officers appointed by an electoral board.”

Technical Difficulties on Election Day:

In the event that voting equipment malfunctions or is damaged, immediately report to the voting machine technicians or the registrar/electoral board’s office. Follow procedures in the Code under “Inoperative Equipment.” (§ 24.2-642)

• If using optical scan ballots, voting will continue normally except for the tabulating. (§ 24.2-642) Any voted ballots that must be placed in the emergency ballot container will remain in that container until the polls close and then the ballots will be fed through the counter. If the officials neglect to run the ballots in the emergency ballot container before running the tapes, the technicians and an electoral board member must be summoned to the precinct and observe while all the ballots are run through the counter again before the results can be reported. The ballots may have to be read or hand counted if the locality does not have the equipment.

• If using DREs, and other equipment is not available or usable, voting should continue using paper ballots, and emergency paper ballots if necessary. (§ 24.2-642)

• In the event that the ballot container is damaged or missing, immediately report this to the registrar. The technician will be sent to repair or replace the container. If the emergency ballot slot cannot be used, the voters must place their ballots in the black supply container, or other container that is sealed and has a slot on top. The ballots must remain in that container until the polls close and then the ballots must be fed through the tabulator.
• **In the event that the precinct phone is not working**, report the problem to the custodial or the management staff. Another phone may be obtained to report the nonfunctional phone or down service to the registrar. If needed, a cellular phone may be provided until phone service is restored.

• **In the event that the registrar’s phones are not working**, cellular phones may be used until service is restored. All precincts must be notified of the new temporary number at which the registrar’s staff may be reached.

• **In the event of power failure at the registrar’s Office**, the registrar shall determine if the staff will be relocated. All election officials must be notified of the new location and contact information.

**Unruly Behavior at the Polling Location:**

Although it is not unusual for a parent or guardian to bring one or more children into the polling place, this should only be allowed as long as it is not a disruption to other voters.

☞ Section 24.2-643 of the Code of Virginia states, “A voter may be accompanied into the voting booth by his child age fifteen or younger.” Additionally, if the child feeds the ballot into the tabulator or otherwise casts the ballot and the voter has not completed the ballot, a new ballot will not be provided. If a ballot is damaged, the voter may “void” it and a new ballot is issued. However, children should not be allowed to mark or play with a ballot.

• In the event of a poll watcher or voter disrupting the polls or person(s) campaigning within the prohibited area, first have two election officials ask them to leave. However, if the person persists, call 9-1-1. Be sure to identify yourself as the chief election officer or an election official. Complete an Incident Report.

☞ Section 24.2-606 of the Code of Virginia authorizes officers of election to appoint in writing one or more persons, who will have all the powers of a law enforcement officer in the polling place and within the prohibited area. This action should be taken as the last resort for the protection of election officials and the public.

• If someone is known to have a weapon, and is not a sworn law enforcement official displaying their badge, or a person displaying a valid Virginia concealed weapons permit, have more than one election official approach the individual together and simply ask him to leave the weapon outside. If the person does not immediately comply, have an election official call 9-1-1 and report the incident. All unsafe or threatening behavior should be reported to 9-1-1. Unsafe behavior may include the following:
  • Display of multiple or unusual weapons
  • Display of a weapon in a position in which it could be used.
  • Shoving, pushing, unnecessary physical contact, abusive language or gestures.
  • Statements that contain violent descriptions.

☞ Do not get personally involved if you believe that an assault is occurring. Instead, call 9-1-1 and complete the Incident Report.
If A Court Orders Polling Hours Extended
In any situation where the officers of election are notified that the polling hours have been extended by court order, any person who offers to vote after the normal closing time of 7 p.m. must vote a provisional ballot. (§ 24.2-653(C).)

• If news of the extended hours did not come from the general registrar or electoral board or via delivery of an official copy of the order from the court, the chief or assistant chief officer should immediately attempt to verify the extension with the registrar or electoral board. If a copy of the order is delivered to the polling place, the chief or assistant chief should immediately inform the general registrar or electoral board of its receipt and contents.

• Estimate the number of extra paper ballots and provisional ballot envelopes that will be needed during the extended polling hours (all voters during that time must vote provisional ballots), and ask the general registrar or electoral board to have them delivered to the polling place. If there is not enough time to have them delivered, proceed with the stock on hand and use the procedures for emergency paper ballots under SBE 642 Procedure for Use of Authorization to Reproduce Ballots.

• If additional provisional ballot envelopes are needed, an officer may photocopy both sides of a blank provisional ballot envelope to be attached to a plain envelope or securely wrapped and sealed around the outside of the folded paper ballot (with the information normally on the envelope visible, but the ballot kept private) if no plain envelopes are available. (Do not staple through any ballot.)

• All qualified voters who are in line when polls would normally close must vote in the usual manner.

• Any voter entering the line after the normal closing time, but before the extended closing time, must vote by provisional ballot. Keep a separate running count of the number of provisional ballots issued after the normal poll closing time. What one judge orders, a higher court may overturn, so the ballots and counts must be kept completely separate.

• These voters may also be voting a provisional ballot for any of the usual reasons and all applicable reasons should be marked. These voters will not be marked with a Pollbook count number to indicate that they have voted but will be listed in the same manner as other provisional voters. These ballots will be counted and added to the results by the electoral board; they are not counted at the polls by the officers.

• After all voters in line by the extended poll closing time have voted, proceed to close the polls and report the results normally. If extra lines or comments must be added to the Statement of Results to separately account for the ballots cast after the normal poll closing time, do so before the Statement is signed and the materials are sealed.