



Be Ready: Contingency Planning in Elections *EAC Roundtable Discussion*

September 20, 2011

EAC Offices
Suite 150
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Washington, DC

Participate

Live webcast at www.eac.gov

Twitter: @EACgov #BReady2012

Submit questions & comments via Twitter and webcast

Premise

Unexpected events happen during elections, as recent earthquakes and hurricanes remind us. Election officials throughout the nation routinely examine past emergencies and anticipate new ones to develop their community's election contingency plan. In conjunction with National Preparedness Month and in preparation for the 2012 federal elections, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) hosts a national discussion about contingency planning strategies to prevent or minimize interruptions in voting during an emergency or crisis situation.

Goal

Provide real world contingency planning solutions and strategies to election officials around the country as they prepare for the 2012 federal elections.

Agenda

- I. **9:00 – 11:00 a.m.** **FEMA & the American Red Cross: Prepare for the Unexpected**
Presentations by Damon Penn, assistant administrator of the National Continuity Programs (NCP) Directorate, Federal Emergency Management Agency & Trevor Riggen, senior director of disaster services, American Red Cross

- 11:00 – 11:15 a.m. Morning Break**
- II. 11:15 – 12:30 p.m. Contingency Planning in Elections**
Presentation by Keith Cunningham, director of special projects, Ohio Secretary of State's office
- 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Lunch Break**
- III. 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Lessons Learned from Election Officials**
1. Hurricane Katrina: Records Retention and Recovery.
Presentation by St. Landry Parish, Louisiana Clerk of Court Charles Jagneaux
 2. Warehouse Fires in Texas: Voting Equipment Staging and Storage. *Presentation by Harris County, Texas, Clerk Stan Stanart*
- IV. 3:30 – 4:00 p.m. Conclusion**

Participants

Moderator: Merle King, executive director, Georgia's Center for Election Systems, Kennesaw State University. Jeannie Layson, EAC director of Communications & Congressional Affairs, will participate and field questions and comments from the public. She will also tweet live throughout the discussion.

- **Keith Cunningham**, special projects manager, Ohio Secretary of State's Office (presenter)
- **Charles Jagneaux**, St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, clerk of court (presenter)
- **Shelley McThomas**, Kansas City Board of Election Commissioners director
- **Damon Penn**, assistant administrator of the National Continuity Programs (NCP) Directorate, Federal Emergency Management Agency (presenter)
- **Trevor Rigger**, senior director of disaster services, American Red Cross (presenter)
- **Ed Smith** of Dominion Voting
- **Stan Stanart**, Harris County, Texas, clerk (presenter)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These are questions (divided by discussion segment) the moderator is likely to pose to the entire panel. Depending on the direction of the discussion and time limitations, all questions may not be asked. These questions are provided to give the panelists the opportunity to further prepare for the discussion and to inform the public, including election officials, about likely topics.

I. 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. FEMA & the American Red Cross: Prepare for the Unexpected

- a. How can local governments prepare to work with federal or national organizations during a crisis?
- b. Please discuss the elements of a successful contingency plan partnership among different levels of government and entities that you've observed.
- c. What role do social media play during a crisis? How do you balance using traditional and new means of communication during a crisis?
- d. During tough budget times, partnerships among different levels of government, non profits and community groups are more important than ever. Can you discuss or point to a successful partnership model used during a crisis or emergency? Specifically, cooperation among state and local level government entities, utility companies and community organizations?
- e. Are there items or tools you always carry during an emergency or crisis?
- f. What online resources or tools can you offer to election officials who may want to customize your recommendations for their communities?

II. 11:15 – 12:30 p.m. Contingency Planning in Elections

- a. What are the high level elements of a good contingency plan for elections? How often do you revise your plan?
- b. If you're developing a contingency plan from scratch, how do you get started?
- c. I'd like to get a perspective from both election officials and the voting machine vendor community about shared responsibility during a crisis. For example, what is your view of the appropriate division of responsibility in the event of a flood or a fire that damages equipment?
- d. For election officials, how have you structured your support contracts to address election continuity?
- e. For vendors, how do you test backup and recovery procedures in your internal quality assurance process? And what is your ability to field response teams to jurisdictions during an emergency?
- f. For election officials, how dependent are you on vendors during an emergency? And do you think your situation is typical? Do most election officials have to rely heavily on vendors?

III. 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Lessons Learned from Election Officials

- a. Please describe your approach to collaborate with state and local government entities and community groups to develop contingency plans.
- b. All of us are facing budget cuts, and that means having to do more with less. Please discuss the costs associated with developing and implementing contingency plans. What are the cost implications if you don't have a contingency plan in place?

- c. How important is a decision making hierarchy during an emergency? Who speaks for your office during an emergency?
- d. What role do the media play during an emergency? Do you think it's important to schedule regular media availabilities even if there is nothing new to report?
- e. Have you used social media to communicate during a crisis? If so, how? And was it a useful communications tool?
- f. How do you maintain credibility among voters during an emergency? How do you convince them that everything is being done to mitigate the situation?
- g. It's important to evaluate contingency plans after an event. Please share your observations after implementing your plans. What worked? What didn't work? And what improvements or changes did you make?