



Committee for **SAFE AND SECURE ELECTIONS**



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CSSE Goals

To **build trust** and **stronger relationships** between election officials and law enforcement;

To **develop solutions** that respond to and help curb the rise in intimidation, threats and violence against elections workers;

And to **create and share resources** and **best practices** for law enforcement and election officials.

Why Washington Sheriffs Matter in the Election Process

- **Public safety leaders**
 - visible, trusted, accountable in communities
- **Custodians of law & order**
 - enforcing election laws, protecting election infrastructure
- **Partners to election officials**
 - supporting secure drop boxes, responding to threats, maintaining peace



The Sheriff's Role in Elections: Understanding the Current Threat Landscape



National Threats, Swatting, Shots Fired, & Unknown Substances

New Mexico shootings follow two years of election assaults

Jan. 18, 2023 at 11:00 am | Updated Jan. 19, 2023 at 5:27 am

CBS EVENING NEWS

Election officials say threats are escalating ahead of 2024 vote: "A heightened state of anxiety"

CBS
Evening
News

By Major Garrett
Updated on: September 10, 2024 / 7:49 PM EDT / CBS News



Trump assassination attempts

At a Pennsylvania campaign rally in July, Trump was grazed on the ear by one of a hail of bullets fired by a gunman, fatally shooting one Trump supporter and badly wounding two others, before police killed him. Then in September, a man with a rifle apparently plotted to kill Trump but was discovered in some shrubbery near the presidents' golf course in Florida and arrested by Secret Service agents.

Michigan politicians swatted via same emails about violence at their homes



Clara Hendrickson
Detroit Free Press

Published 6:04 a.m. ET Sept. 13, 2024 | Updated 9:21 p.m. ET Sept. 13, 2024

ATLANTA

Ga. election official latest victim of 'swatting,' says someone reported shooting at his home

ELECTIONS

Envelopes with fentanyl or other substances were sent to several elections offices

NOVEMBER 9, 2023 · 9:11 PM ET

By The Associated Press

Here in Washington...

*Elections staff in Washington and across the country were targeted repeatedly in 2023, most prominently during the November general election when **white powder was mailed to offices across the nation, including King, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Spokane counties.***

*Similar attacks occurred during the Aug. 1 primary, when **King County and Okanogan County election officials received suspicious substances in envelopes.** The envelope and letter received by King County Elections were turned over to the United States Postal Inspection Service, which performed an analysis that detected trace amounts of fentanyl.*

*The substance found in the Okanogan County envelope was determined to be unharmful, but that **testing only happened after the shock of discovering the powder-filled envelope led to the evacuation of the county courthouse.** Election officials from several Washington counties received threats, some being to their lives, during the 2020 election.*



A ballot drop box in at the Fisher's Landing Transit Center in Vancouver, Wash., pictured here Oct. 28, 2024, was set ablaze early Monday morning. The fire destroyed hundreds of ballots.

Erik Neumann / OPB

Challenging Visitors and Content Creators

Four Steps to Working With Challenging Visitors and Disruptive Content Creators

Providing transparency to the public in a manner that protects sensitive voter information, staff and election operational integrity is a core responsibility for election officials across the country. Striking the proper balance between these important, but occasionally conflicting, interests is an essential ingredient to building public trust and ensuring safe and secure elections.

Traditionally, state laws around election transparency focus on the rights of and restrictions applicable to observers at polling locations. However, there are often fewer clear legislative directives governing visitors or observers at election officials' offices, which are increasingly being visited by individuals seeking (or claiming to seek) information about election operations.

These individuals may have a range of objectives. Visitors may include students on field trips, local media, and other members of the public eager to learn about local election administration. Some visitors may be content creators seeking to generate income through filming and posting the resulting video on YouTube for profit. Some of these content creators label their content "First Amendment Audits."

First Amendment Auditing is a "nationwide movement, loosely connected through social media and other online platforms, [which] involves individuals who film their encounters with government officials and employees and subsequently post the videos online." The practice is believed to have originated through filming interactions with law enforcement officers and has now extended to other areas of government. This movement has no explicit [partisan affiliation](#) and includes those from "across the ideological spectrum."

The techniques vary from creator to creator, with **some engaging in a calm and respectful manner and others taking a more antagonistic approach, which may include "provoking employees and officials, and interfering with employees' ability to conduct [government] business."** Videos showing tense interactions can be "a [significant source of income](#) for [content creators who] get paid by posting their videos online." More dramatic and confrontational videos tend to attract more views and more revenue. At times, these interactions can be dangerous, resulting in [violence or criminal activity](#).

Regardless of the visitor's objective, it's important for election officials to follow a consistent set of steps that **promote continued transparency- and successful interactions with all members of the public at their offices - while maintaining operational integrity and protecting voter and other sensitive election information.**

1 KNOW
the laws in your jurisdiction

2 PREPARE
to facilitate smooth operations in stressful situations

3 PROTECT
your staff, voters, sensitive information, and operational integrity

4 SHARE
appropriate information and facilitate transparency

KNOW. PREPARE. PROTECT. SHARE.

FOUR STEPS TO WORKING WITH CHALLENGING VISITORS AND DISRUPTIVE CONTENT CREATORS

Committee for
**SAFE AND SECURE
ELECTIONS**

1

In early July, a man wearing a gator face mask, sunglasses, and camera equipment attached to a vest walked into the elections building in King County, Washington, and began to take videos and photos of the employees and their surroundings.

The man, according to a video obtained by ABC News, approached a counter and began harassing the election workers as he recorded them with his equipment.

After he left, the man posted a video of the interaction on YouTube and published some of the staff's names, emails, and phone numbers, which officials said resulted in "dozens of calls and emails" to election workers.



The Sheriff's Role in Elections: 2024 Bomb Threats and 2025 Emerging Threats



Two Waves of Bomb Threats

I've planted a bomb (lead azide) in your office's building at 216 SE 4th Street.

Pendleton, OR – Friday November 8, 5:01pm



One of at least

250

bomb threats
nationwide

Two Types of Bomb Threats

Mailum/CyberFear Threat Actor



Mail.ru Threat Actor



Significant differences emerge between the threats...

The senders...

Some threats came from **Mailum/CyberFear.com**

Mailum/CyberFear are an email service provider based out of Poland.

- Emphasis on security / encryption of email.
- Mission is to make emails private again.
and No one but you can access your data.



Some threats came from **Mail.ru**

Mail.ru is roughly the Russian version of Google/Gmail.

- Anyone can set up an account, does not mean the threat came from Russia.
- Owned and operated VK Company which is a large technology company in Russia.



The senders (cont)...

Sender wanted to make it look like it came from an American.

Unique sender names that only sent a small number of threats each (1 or 2).

- oregon_bomber@cyberfear[.]com
- oregon_domestic_terrorist@mailum[.]com
- maryland_maga_bomber@cyberfear[.]com
- maga_alex@cyberfear[.]com
- harris@mailum[.]com
- m_lindell.1488@mailum[.]com

*No known prior usage of these accounts.

Sender wanted to make it look like it came from a Russian.

Smaller number of accounts used to send threats to multiple targets/states.

- iryna.melin.06@mail[.]ru
- vika.melin.05@mail[.]ru
- skipper.badenhorst@mail[.]ru

*Similar email addresses were used to target Tufts University (2022), airports in the Caribbean (May 2024), and LGBTQ events (June 2024).

Key Learning: Lots of unique senders makes it more difficult (but not impossible) for election officials and law enforcement to connect the dots in real time.

The targets...

Mailum/CyberFear Threats

Primarily targeted election offices on Election Day and Friday. Election officials were the first to see these threats because they were sent directly to election office email accounts. Election Officials were the ones reporting to law enforcement and taking action.

From: maga_sam@mailum.com <maga_sam@mailum.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 5, 2024 5:35 PM
To: Recorder's Public Email Address <Recorder@recorder.pima.gov>
Subject: My manifesto

Key Learning: Election office locations and contact information (phones and email addresses) are easy to collect and systematically target. AI will only make it easier for bad actors to do this at scale going forward.



The screenshot shows the official website of the Oregon Secretary of State, Tobias Read. The header includes the state logo and a search bar. The main content area is titled "County Elections Officials" and includes a section "Connect with County Clerks" with a brief description of their role. Below this is a table titled "Find a County Clerk" listing all 37 Oregon counties in a 4x4 grid.

Find a County Clerk			
Baker	Douglas	Lake	Sherman
Benton	Gilliam	Lane	Tillamook
Clackamas	Grant	Lincoln	Umatilla
Clatsop	Harney	Linn	Union
Columbia	Hood River	Malheur	Wallowa
Coos	Jackson	Marion	Wasco
Crook	Jefferson	Morrow	Washington
Curry	Josephine	Multnomah	Wheeler
Deschutes	Klamath	Polk	Yamhill

The targets...

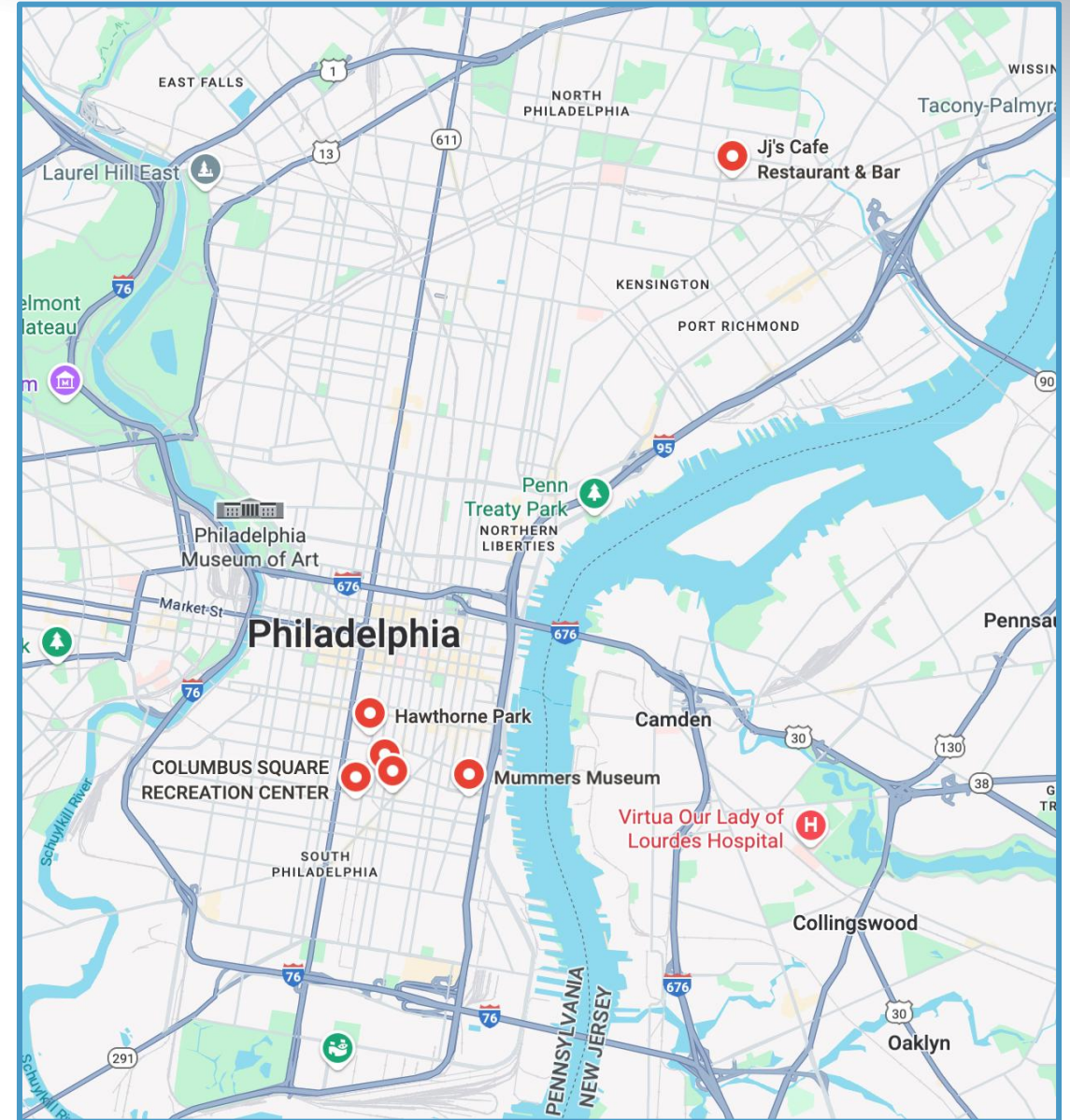
Mail.ru Threat Example

Threat targeting Philadelphia on elections day referenced six polling locations in the city. The locations were copied/pasted verbatim from a roster of all polling locations in Philadelphia posted online.

Jj's Cafe Dining Room (1065 E Erie Ave)
Mummers Museum (200-10 Washington Ave)
Capitolo Recreation Center (900 Federal Street)
St Maron's Church (1013 Ellsworth St)
Columbus Square Recreation Center (1200 Wharton St)
Hawthorne Recreation Center (1200 Carpenter St)

Primarily targeted polling locations on election day. These were **meant to disrupt voting**.

Key Learning: We need to think broadly about who could be targeted before, during, and after an election - and plan accordingly!



The targets...

Mail.ru Threat Example

Mummers Museum (200-10 Washington Ave)

- mummersmus@aol[.]com (Correct)
- education@cummarmuseum[.]org (Jacksonville, FL)

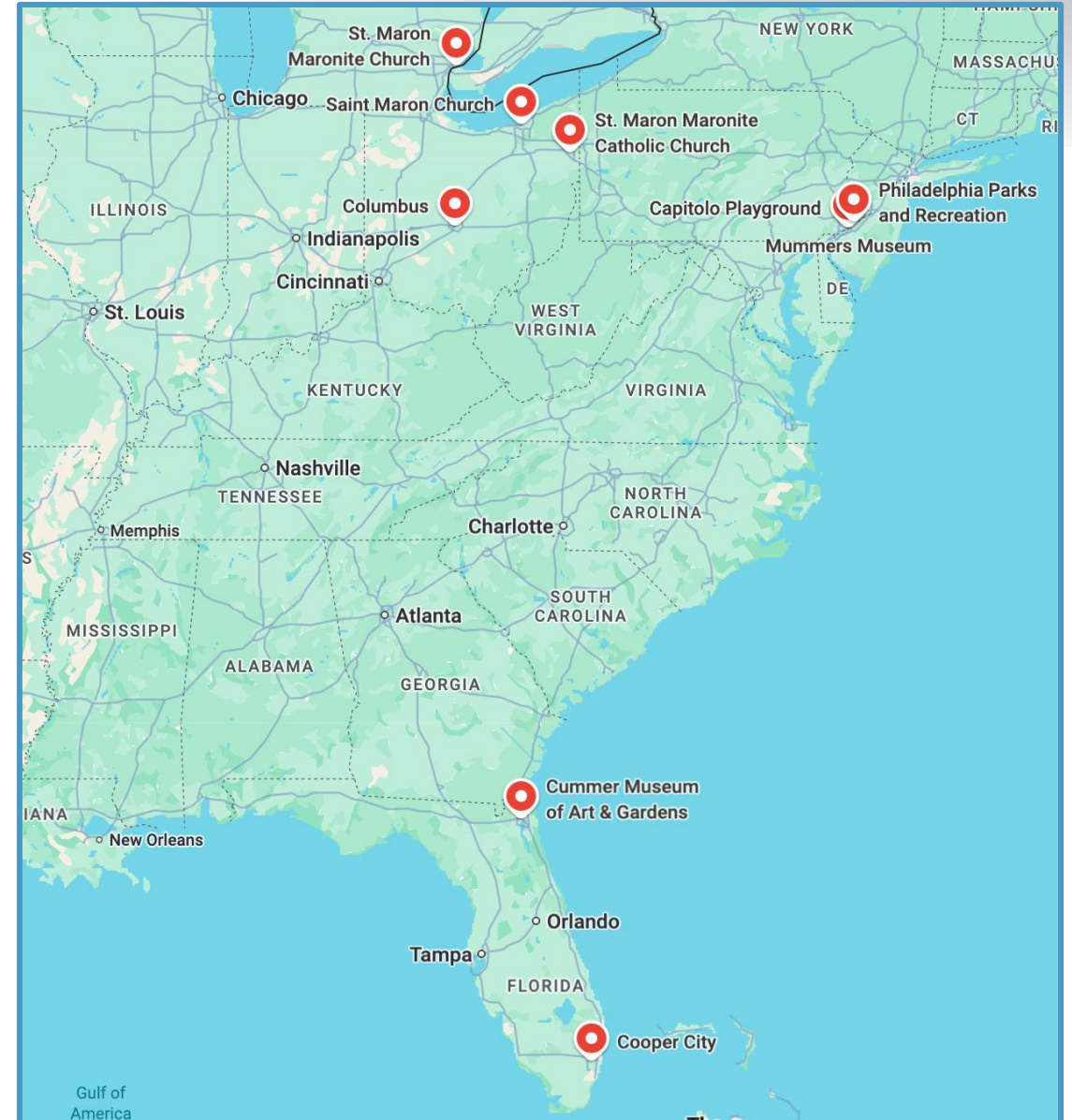
St Maron's Church (1013 Ellsworth St)

- parish@saintmaron-clev[.]org (Cleveland, OH)
- stmaronyoungstown@gmail[.]com (Youngstown, OH)
- saintmaroncleveland@gmail[.]com (Cleveland, OH)
- saintmarondetroit@gmail[.]com (Detroit, MI)

Columbus Square Recreation Center (1200 Wharton St)

- RecParksCustomerService@columbus[.]gov (Columbus, OH)

Key Learning: Election officials were often the last to know about these threats because they were sent to private (and often incorrect) email addresses for locations all over the country.



Different types of threatening language...

Mailum/CyberFear Example

I've planted a bomb (lead azide) in your office at 305 Main Street. It is small and hidden very well. It probably won't damage the building very much but it will wound lots of people when it explodes. I plan on remotely triggering the device's detonation as soon as there is a large police presence.

- Extensive details about the bomb's construction and impact
- Less urgency
- Detonation is contingent on police presence

Mail.ru Example

This email informs you that the following locations have been rigged with explosives and will detonate within an hour, it is imperative that you evacuate

- Few details
- Sense of urgency
- Evacuation are the focus/goal

Key Learning: Different threat actors have different targets and objectives.

Lessons Learned (**Preliminary**)

Lesson #1: Bomb threats are not new – but the scope and scale is new.

- **Mitigation:** Assume that you are going to get a bomb threat/hoax around major elections and plan accordingly.

Lesson #2: Bad actors have a range of goals including disruption, chaos, and reducing confidence in the election.

- **Mitigation:** Response should mitigate the security issue while reducing the disruption, preventing chaos, and increasing confidence in the election process.

Lesson #3: Information sharing on physical security threats is as important as information sharing on cybersecurity threats.

- **Mitigation:** Information sharing helps EO and LEs quickly and accurately determine real threats from hoaxes in order to reduce disruptions.

Potential Emerging Threats

- Drones have been used to disrupt mass gathering events, violate protected privacy, deliver contraband to incarcerated individuals and other nefarious acts by various criminal organizations, including drug cartels and terrorists.
- The technology to bring down an illegally operated drone exists, but federal law only authorizes a select few federal agencies to utilize counter-drone equipment.



*Information provided in CSSE Member Sheriff Don Barnes, Orange County, CA OPED - <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/5454817-local-law-enforcement-drones/>

Potential Emerging Threats

- While there are heavy fines and jail time associated with this crime, there is no immediate way for local law enforcement to disable and bring down an unauthorized drone.
- An EO concerning drone technology and potential associated threats, expanded the counter-drone infrastructure, particularly at mass gathering events. The EO makes some equipment funding available to state and local agencies, it does not provide local jurisdictions with counter-drone authority, as that requires a law passed by Congress.



*Information provided in CSSE Member Sheriff Don Barnes, Orange County, CA OPED - <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/5454817-local-law-enforcement-drones/>

The Sheriff's Role in Elections: Focusing on Solutions and Resources



Five Steps to Safer Elections



1 Meet

Meet with counterparts and other stakeholders

2 Share

Share experiences, contact information, election details, and expectations

3 Agree

Agree to work together regularly and define rules of engagement where voters are present

4 Plan

Plan incident response, information sharing, and crisis communications

5 Practice

Practice information sharing and response plans

Law Enforcement Quick Reference Guides

WASHINGTON 2025 LAW ENFORCEMENT QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



This pocket reference guide contains key provisions found within Chapter 84 of Title 29A of the Revised Code of Washington, and other relevant sections.

- Using menace, force, threat, or any unlawful means to hinder or deter a voter from voting is a felony.
- Intimidating a public servant by use of a threat to attempt to influence their vote, decision, or other official act is a felony.
- Electioneering, interfering with voting, or disrupting the administration of a voting center or ballot drop location is a misdemeanor.
- Harassment of an election official is a class C felony.

VOTING HOURS

WA is a vote-by-mail state. In-person accessible voting is available at local centers during business hours starting 18 days before the election until 8 p.m. on Election Day:
sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/voter-registration/drop-box-and-voting-center-locations

2025 ELECTION DATES

Primary Election: August 5
General Election: November 4
For other election dates: sos.wa.gov/elections/elections-calendar/dates-and-deadlines

REPORT SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR TO

Your local election official:
sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/voter-registration/county-elections-offices

WA Secretary of State:
(360) 902-4180; elections@sos.wa.gov;
sos.wa.gov/elections/contact-info



Hindering or bribing voter.

RCW 29A.84.620

Any person who uses menace, force, threat, or any unlawful means towards any voter to hinder or deter such a voter from voting, or directly or indirectly offers any bribe, reward, or any thing of value to a voter in exchange for the voter's vote for or against any person or ballot measure, or authorizes any person to do so, is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Intimidating a public servant.

RCW 9A.76.180

(1) A person is guilty of intimidating a public servant if, by use of a threat, he or she attempts to influence a public servant's vote, opinion, decision, or other official action as a public servant.

(3) "Threat" as used in this section means:

(a) To communicate, directly or indirectly, the intent immediately to use force against any person who is present at the time; or

(b) Threats as defined in RCW 9A.04.110.

(4) Intimidating a public servant is a class B felony.

["Public servant" includes any person who presently occupies the position of or has been elected, appointed, or designated to become any officer or employee of government, and any person participating as an advisor, consultant, or otherwise in performing a governmental function, under RCW 9A.04.110 (23)]

Definition—Penalties.

RCW 9A.46.020

(1) A person is guilty of harassment if:

(a) Without lawful authority, the person knowingly threatens:

Examples of hindering or bribing a voter:

- Offering a bribe: A person hands out gift cards outside a ballot drop box in exchange for proof that someone voted a certain way.
- Using threats: A person blocks the entrance to a voting center, telling voters they'll regret it if they cast a ballot.
- Unlawful means: Someone spreads false claims that ballots will be confiscated at a drop box to scare voters away.
- Authorizing others: A campaign worker instructs volunteers to offer rides and cash to voters if they promise to support a candidate.

Examples of Intimidation:

- Late-night voicemail with specific threat
 - a. Scenario: County elections clerk receives a voicemail: Stop certifying those ballots tomorrow or we'll make sure you lose everything — you'll regret it.
- Stalking/Following a temporary election worker
 - a. Scenario: A temporary ballot counter notices the same vehicle parked outside their home after several shifts; the driver snaps photos and leaves notes saying we're watching.
- Doxxing + violent rhetoric on social media
 - a. Scenario: A public Facebook group reposts an elections manager's home address and writes: People who help rig elections should be taught a lesson.

- (i) To cause bodily injury immediately or in the future to the person threatened or to any other person; or
- (ii) To cause physical damage to the property of a person other than the actor; or
- (iii) To subject the person threatened or any other person to physical confinement or restraint; or
- (iv) Maliciously to do any other act which is intended to substantially harm the person threatened or another with respect to his or her physical health or safety; and

(b) The person by words or conduct places the person threatened in reasonable fear that the threat will be carried out. "Words or conduct" includes, in addition to any other form of communication or conduct, the sending of an electronic communication.

(2) (a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, a person who harasses another is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

(b) A person who harasses another is guilty of a class C felony if any of the following apply: (i) The person has previously been convicted in this or any other state of any crime of harassment, as defined in RCW 9A.46.060, of the same victim or members of the victim's family or household or any person specifically named in a no-contact or no-harassment order; (ii) the person harasses another person under subsection (1)(a)(i) of this section by threatening to kill the person threatened or any other person; (iii) the person harasses a criminal justice participant or election official who is performing his or her official duties at the time the threat is made; or (iv) the person harasses a criminal justice participant or election official because of an action taken or decision made by the criminal justice participant or election official during the performance of his or her official duties. For

Definition: Harassment = knowingly making a threat, putting the victim in reasonable fear. Types of threats:

- To injure someone (now or in the future).
- To damage someone's property.
- To confine or restrain someone.
- To do something intended to seriously harm health or safety.
- Includes electronic threats (texts, emails, social media).

Penalties:

- Normally a gross misdemeanor.
- Elevated to a Class C felony if:
 - Prior harassment convictions.
 - Threat to kill.
 - Target is a criminal justice participant or election official doing their job.

Extra protections: Threatened officials and their families can use the Address Confidentiality Program.

the purposes of (b)(iii) and (iv) of this subsection, the fear from the threat must be a fear that a reasonable criminal justice participant or election official would have under all the circumstances. Threatening words do not constitute harassment if it is apparent to the criminal justice participant or election official that the person does not have the present and future ability to carry out the threat.

(3) Any criminal justice participant or election official who is a target for threats or harassment prohibited under subsection (2)(b)(iii) or (iv) of this section, and any person residing with him or her, shall be eligible for the address confidentiality program created under RCW 40.24.030.

(4) For purposes of this section, a criminal justice participant includes any (a) federal, state, or local law enforcement agency employee; (b) federal, state, or local prosecuting attorney or deputy prosecuting attorney; (c) staff member of any adult corrections institution or local adult detention facility; (d) staff member of any juvenile corrections institution or local juvenile detention facility; (e) community corrections officer, probation, or parole officer; (f) member of the indeterminate sentence review board; (g) advocate from a crime victim/witness program; or (h) defense attorney.

(5) For the purposes of this section, an election official includes any staff member of the office of the secretary of state or staff member of a county auditor's office, regardless of whether the member is employed on a temporary or part-time basis, whose duties relate to voter registration or the processing of votes as provided in Title 29A RCW.

(6) The penalties provided in this section for harassment do not preclude the victim from seeking any other remedy otherwise available under law.

Reasonable fear standard:

- The threat must be one that a reasonable election official or criminal justice participant would take seriously under the circumstances.
- Empty words don't count if the official can tell the person has no ability to carry it out.

Extra protections for officials:

- Harassment targeting election officials or criminal justice participants is a Class C felony.
- Coverage extends to their household members.

Who is protected?

- Criminal justice participants = law enforcement, prosecutors, corrections staff, probation/parole officers, victim advocates, defense attorneys, etc.
- Election officials = staff of the Secretary of State or county auditors' offices, including temporary and part-time workers handling voter registration or ballot processing.

Civil remedies remain available — criminal penalties don't replace other legal protections.

A gross misdemeanor under this section is punishable to the same extent as a gross misdemeanor that is punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Acts prohibited near voting centers, student engagement hubs, and ballot drop boxes. RCW 29A.84.510

(1) During the voting period that begins eighteen days before and ends the day of a special election, general election, or primary, no person may:

(a) Within a voting center or student engagement hub or in any public street or room in any public manner within 100 feet measured radially from the entrance to a voting center or student engagement hub or 25 feet measured radially from a ballot drop box as described in RCW 29A.40.170:

- (i) Suggest or persuade or attempt to suggest or persuade any voter to vote for or against any candidate or ballot measure;
- (ii) Circulate cards or handbills of any kind;
- (iii) Solicit signatures to any kind of petition; or
- (iv) Engage in any practice which interferes with the freedom of voters to exercise their franchise or disrupts the administration of the voting center;

(b) Engage in any activities restricted under (a) of this subsection through electronic amplification located more than 100 feet from an entrance to a voting center or student engagement hub or 25 feet from an entrance to a ballot drop box if the person is capable of being understood within 100 feet of the voting center or student engagement hub or 25 feet of the ballot drop box;

- Applies during the voting period → 18 days before through Election Day.
- Buffer zones:
 - 100 feet from voting center or student engagement hub entrance.
 - 25 feet from ballot drop box entrance.
- Prohibited activities inside zones:
 - Persuading or suggesting how someone should vote.
 - Handing out flyers, cards, or petitions.
 - Soliciting signatures for petitions.
 - Any action interfering with voter freedom or disrupting operations.
- Amplified sound: Not allowed if it can be heard within restricted zone.
- Blocking access: Doors, entrances, or free passage cannot be obstructed.
- Enforcement: Sheriffs/deputies must stop the activity and may arrest violators.
- Penalty: Gross misdemeanor (RCW 9A.20.021) + possible prosecution costs.
- Exception: Political party observers may observe, but cannot campaign or interfere.

(c) Obstruct the doors or entries to a building in which a voting center or ballot drop location is located or prevent free access to and from any voting center or ballot drop location.

(2) The auditor shall post a sign at the point or points specified at each voting center as required by RCW 29A.40.160 during the voting period providing notice of the prohibition in subsection (1)(a) of this section.

(3) Any sheriff, deputy sheriff, or municipal law enforcement officer shall stop the prohibited activity, and may arrest any person engaging in the prohibited activity.

(4) Any violation of this section is a gross misdemeanor, punishable to the same extent as a gross misdemeanor that is punishable under RCW 9A.20.021, and the person convicted may be ordered to pay the costs of prosecution.

(5) Nothing in this section may be construed to limit or otherwise restrict the access of an authorized political party observer to a voting center, student engagement hub, or ballot drop box for the purpose of observing the election process.

Electioneering at voting center or ballot drop location by election officers forbidden. RCW 29A.84.520

Any election officer who does any electioneering at a voting center or ballot drop location during the voting period that begins eighteen days before and ends the day of a special election, general election, or primary is guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction must be fined in any sum not exceeding one hundred dollars and pay the costs of prosecution.

- Applies to election officers at voting centers or ballot drop locations.
- Timeframe: From 18 days before through Election Day.
- Prohibition: Election officers cannot do any electioneering while on duty at these sites.
- No promoting or opposing candidates.
- No advocating for or against ballot measures.
- No distributing or displaying campaign materials.
- Penalty:
 - a. Misdemeanor offense.
 - b. Fine up to \$100 plus prosecution costs.

Possessing dangerous weapons at voting facilities—Penalty—Exceptions.

RCW 9.41.284

(1) Except as provided in subsections (3) and (4) of this section, it is unlawful for a person to knowingly carry onto, or to possess in, a ballot counting center, a voting center, a student engagement hub, or the county elections and voter registration office, or areas of facilities while being used as a ballot counting center, a voting center, a student engagement hub, or the county elections and voter registration office:

(a) Any firearm;

(b) Any other dangerous weapon as described in RCW 9.41.250;

(c) Any air gun, including any air pistol or air rifle, designed to propel a BB, pellet, or other projectile by the discharge of compressed air, carbon dioxide, or other gas;

(d) (i) Any portable device manufactured to function as a weapon and which is commonly known as a stun gun, including a projectile stun gun that projects wired probes that are attached to the device that emit an electrical charge designed to administer to a person or an animal an electric shock, charge, or impulse; or

(ii) Any device, object, or instrument that is used or intended to be used as a weapon with the intent to injure a person by an electric shock, charge, or impulse; or

(e) Any spring blade knife as defined in RCW 9.41.250.

(2) (a) A person who violates subsection (1) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(b) Second and subsequent violations of this section are a gross misdemeanor.

[Subsection (1) of this section does not apply to federal, state, or local law enforcement officers or trained security personnel

- Unlawful to possess or carry at:
 - a. Ballot counting centers
 - b. Voting centers
 - c. Student engagement hubs
 - d. County elections & voter registration offices
- Prohibited items include:
 - a. Firearms
 - b. Other dangerous weapons (RCW 9.41.250)
 - c. Air guns (BB/pellet/CO₂)
 - d. Stun guns/Tasers (wired or contact)
 - e. Spring blade knives
- Penalties:
 - a. 1st violation → Misdemeanor
 - b. Repeat violations → Gross misdemeanor
- Exceptions:
 - a. On-duty federal, state, or local law enforcement
 - b. Trained security hired by a county for election facilities
 - c. Licensed concealed pistol holders only in voting centers or elections offices (NOT in ballot counting centers)
- Absolute ban: All firearms & dangerous weapons prohibited in ballot counting centers.

hired by a county to provide security for counting or voting centers or other election facilities. This section also does not prohibit a person licensed pursuant to RCW 9A.070 to conceal carry a pistol in a voting center or county elections office, but all firearms and other dangerous weapons are prohibited in all ballot counting centers and facilities.]

Ballots—Removing from voting center or ballot drop location.

RCW 29A.84.540

Any person who, without lawful authority, removes a ballot from a voting center or ballot drop location is guilty of a class C felony punishable to the same extent as a class C felony that is punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Tampering with materials.

RCW 29A.84.550

Any person who willfully defaces, removes, or destroys any of the supplies or materials that the person knows are intended both for use in a voting center, election office, ballot counting area, ballot storage area, or election system including materials and systems meant for enabling a voter to prepare the voter's ballot is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Tampering with registration form or ballot declaration.

RCW 29A.84.050

(1) A person who knowingly destroys, alters, defaces, conceals, or discards a completed voter registration form, signed ballot declaration, or voted ballot is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. This section does not apply to (a) the voter who completed the form or declaration, or (b) a county auditor who acts as authorized by law.

(2) Any person who intentionally fails to return another person's completed voter registration form, signed ballot declaration, or voted ballot to the proper state or county elections office by the applicable deadline is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

RCW 29A.84.540 – Removing Ballots

- Unlawful to remove a ballot from:
 - a. A voting center
 - b. A ballot drop location
- Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021)

RCW 29A.84.550 – Tampering with Election Materials

- Illegal to deface, remove, or destroy:
 - a. Supplies or materials used in a voting center, election office, ballot counting/storage area, or election system
 - b. Materials used to help voters prepare their ballot
- Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021)

RCW 29A.84.050 – Tampering with Registration or Ballot Declarations

- Gross misdemeanor to:
 - a. Destroy, alter, conceal, or discard another person's completed voter registration form, signed ballot declaration, or voted ballot
 - b. Fail to return another person's completed voter registration form, signed ballot declaration, or ballot by the deadline
- Exceptions: the voter themselves, or county auditor acting lawfully

Tampering with voting machines, devices—Unauthorized access.

RCW 29A.84.560

Any person who tampers with or damages or attempts to damage any voting machine or device to be used or being used in a primary or special or general election, or who prevents or attempts to prevent the correct operation of such machine or device, or any unauthorized person who accesses or assists another person or entity with unauthorized access to a voting center, election office, ballot counting area, ballot storage area, or election system, voting machine, or device to be used or being used in a primary or special or general election, is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Unqualified persons voting.

RCW 29A.84.660

Any person who knows that he or she does not possess the legal qualifications of a voter and who votes at any primary or special or general election authorized by law to be held in this state for any office whatever is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Malicious mischief in the first degree.

RCW 9A.48.070

(1) A person is guilty of malicious mischief in the first degree if he or she knowingly and maliciously:

- (a) Causes physical damage to the property of another in an amount exceeding five thousand dollars;
- (b) Causes an interruption or impairment of service rendered to the public by physically damaging or tampering with an emergency vehicle or property of the state, a political subdivision thereof, or a public utility or mode of public transportation, power, or communication;

Illegal acts include:

- Tampering with or damaging voting machines/devices.
- Attempting to prevent proper operation of voting equipment.

Unauthorized access to:

- Voting centers or election offices.
- Ballot counting or storage areas.
- Election systems, voting machines, or devices.

Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021).

Crime: Voting while knowingly unqualified.

- Applies when a person knows they are not legally eligible to vote but still casts a ballot.
- Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021).

Unauthorized Access.

RCW 29A.84.555

Any person who willfully and without authority accesses or assists another person or entity with unauthorized access to a voting center, election office, ballot counting area, ballot storage area, or any election system, or provides unauthorized access to another person or entity to a voting center, election office, ballot counting area, ballot storage area, or any election system, whether electronic or physical access, is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

Officers—Violations generally.

RCW 29A.84.720

Every person charged with the performance of any duty under the provisions of any law of this state relating to elections, including primaries, or the provisions of any charter or ordinance of any city or town of this state relating to elections who willfully neglects or refuses to perform such duty, or provides unauthorized access to a person or entity to physical locations or electronic or physical access to election software or hardware used in any element of conduct of an election, or who, in the performance of such duty, or in the person's official capacity, knowingly or fraudulently violates any of the provisions of law relating to such duty, is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021 and shall forfeit the person's office.

Crime: Willfully and without authority accessing election facilities or systems.

Covers both physical and electronic access.

Applies to:

- Voting centers
- Election offices
- Ballot counting areas
- Ballot storage areas
- Election systems (hardware or software)

Also illegal to assist or provide access to another person/entity.

Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021).

Applies to any official or officer charged with election duties.

Crimes include:

- Willfully neglecting or refusing to perform legal election duties.
- Providing unauthorized access to election facilities, hardware, or software.
- Knowingly or fraudulently violating election laws while on duty.

Penalty: Class C felony (RCW 9A.20.021).

Additional consequence: Officer must forfeit their office if convicted.

Security Assessment Checklist



Committee for
**SAFE AND SECURE
ELECTIONS**

Security Assessment Checklist

FOR ELECTION OFFICES, COUNTING FACILITIES,
POLLING LOCATIONS AND BALLOT DROP BOX SITES

Purpose. This checklist resource is provided to assist with conducting site safety assessments of election offices, polling locations, early voting sites, and ballot drop box areas. It is intended to support election security through physical site evaluation and preparedness planning. This list is based in part upon generally accepted guidance from CISA and FEMA - CISA Security Planning Workbook and BIPS 06/FEMA 426: Reference Manual to Mitigate Potential Terrorist Attacks against Buildings, 2nd Edition.

GENERAL SITE INFORMATION

Facility Name: _____

Address: _____

Type of Facility: ☐ Election Office ☐ Counting/Tabulation Facility
☐ Polling Location ☐ Ballot Drop Box Site ☐ Other _____

Facility Point of Contact: _____

Contact Information: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Assessing Officer(s): _____

PERIMETER SECURITY

- ☐ Perimeter clearly defined (fences, bollards, landscaping, signage)
- ☐ Controlled vehicle access points
- ☐ Sufficient lighting around the perimeter
- ☐ Surveillance cameras covering perimeter areas
- ☐ Landscaping trimmed to reduce hiding places
- ☐ Clear line of sight to building entrances and exits
- ☐ Barriers capable of stopping vehicles where required
- ☐ No blind spots or dark areas around perimeter

BUILDING EXTERIOR

- ☐ Secure doors and windows (quality locks, no visible damage)
- ☐ Emergency exits secured but accessible in emergencies
- ☐ Exterior lighting functional and adequate
- ☐ Exterior walls resistant to forced entry or blast (as feasible)
- ☐ Building address clearly marked and visible
- ☐ Rooftop access secured
- ☐ Loading docks monitored and controlled

ACCESS CONTROL

- ☐ Designated public entrances separated from staff/secured entrances
- ☐ Sign-in/sign-out procedures for visitors and contractors
- ☐ Visitor identification required and visibly worn in restricted areas
- ☐ Badging system for staff
- ☐ Background checks conducted on all staff members
- ☐ Background checks conducted by vendors on their personnel
- ☐ Electronic access controls functioning properly
- ☐ Interior doors secured as appropriate
- ☐ Facility has a designated security manager

INTERIOR SECURITY MEASURES

- ☐ Video surveillance and recording inside facility covering key areas
- ☐ Panic alarms or duress buttons in place and operational
- ☐ Secure storage for sensitive materials (ballots, equipment)
- ☐ Bulletproof/Bullet resistant glass between public and staff areas
- ☐ Fire detection and suppression systems functional
- ☐ Emergency exits marked and unobstructed
- ☐ Hallways and stairwells well-lit and free of obstructions
- ☐ Mail/package screening procedures in place (for example: A negative pressure room, PPE)

BALLOT DROP BOX SITES

(If Applicable)

- ☐ Drop box secured to prevent removal or tampering
- ☐ Adequate lighting around drop box
- ☐ Video surveillance equipment and placement complies with state law (if applicable)
- ☐ Fire-resistant or fire-suppressant features
- ☐ Routine inspections documented
- ☐ Law enforcement notified of drop box locations for patrols

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- ☐ Emergency response plans documented and accessible
- ☐ Site has a designated business continuity manager accountable for business continuity management policy and implementation.
- ☐ Staff familiar with emergency procedures (evacuation, lockdown)
- ☐ Coordination established with local emergency responders
- ☐ Mass notification systems tested and functional
- ☐ Backup communication methods available
- ☐ Facility participates in drills or tabletop exercises
- ☐ Facility has continuity plans for power, IT and operations
- ☐ Staging areas for emergency responders identified
- ☐ Primary law enforcement agency has conducted an onsite visit of the facility
- ☐ Primary fire response agency has conducted an onsite visit of the facility

LAW ENFORCEMENT & EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- ☐ Clear communication plan between law enforcement and election officials
- ☐ Site-specific response plan for various threats
- ☐ Site included in jurisdiction's emergency response exercises or tabletop planning
- ☐ MOUs or working protocols in place with law enforcement and emergency services
- ☐ Security coordinator identified and accessible for each site

COMMUNICATIONS

- ☐ Election officials have current point of contact for local law enforcement and emergency services
- ☐ Site has redundant communication methods (two way radios, cell phones, etc.)
- ☐ Crisis communication plan drafted
- ☐ Election office has media messaging plan in coordination with public safety

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

for Election Events

- ☐ Staff aware of potential interactions with "content creators" or disruptive visitors
- ☐ Calendar of election events (e.g., election day, ballot counting, logic and accuracy testing)

VULNERABILITIES FOUND

List any vulnerabilities observed during assessment, e.g., "no surveillance covering rear entrance"

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

List recommendations to address identified vulnerabilities, e.g., "install camera to cover rear entrance"

References.

FEMA Emergency Management Institute. Emergency Response Information for School Facilities. <https://training.fema.gov>
North Dakota State University. Organizational Resilience
Interagency Security Committee. Facility Security Plan: An Interagency Security Committee Guide. ISC Facility Security Plan Guide
CISA Security Planning Workbook.
National Fire Protection Association. Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management - Standard on Continuity, Emergency, and Crisis Management
FEMA / DHS. Buildings and Infrastructure Protection Series - Reference Manual to Mitigate Potential Terrorist Attacks Against Buildings. BIPS 06/FEMA 426: Reference Manual to Mitigate Potential Terrorist Attacks against Buildings, 2nd Edition



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Combating Swatting Attempts

Election Officials and Law Enforcement: Working Together to Combat Swatting

Election officials and law enforcement have already faced bomb threats and various swatting incidents aimed at election officials around the country.

Swatting, where false emergency calls are made to draw a heavily armed police – or “SWAT team” – response to a specific location, is dangerous and disruptive.

Law enforcement plays a critical role in identifying and mitigating reports so as to reduce danger to those involved and to minimize the overall impact these types of reports can have on the victim. Swatting attempts to intimidate and silence targeted individuals, and poses a risk to the democratic process and public safety.



safeelections.org

Steps to Combat Swatting	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure your elections office establishes a dialogue with a local police or sheriff representative who may be designated as the elections liaison.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide the liaison with the names and physical home addresses of election officials and clerical or higher risk staff, specific locations of voting centers and counting facilities, and any other relevant election-related locations within your jurisdiction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask law enforcement if it's possible to have a flap put into their computer-aided dispatch system to alert 9-1-1 staff and responding officers of the nature of those locations, with a specific note about concerns regarding swatting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide police and 9-1-1 staff with 24-hour cell phone numbers for critical elections staff who can be reached in the event of possible false reports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage police to confer with federal authorities such as the FBI or DHS on current trends in swatting, as well as ways to spot indicators of swatting calls/ reports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish protocols for communication between elections staff at the local, regional and state levels to share information in the event that one or more jurisdictions experience a swatting call so that others can be alerted to be on the lookout for similar incidents within their jurisdiction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Train your staff to remain calm in the event of such an episode in your jurisdiction and consult with your local police on an area-specific protocol to quickly and succinctly relay to responding officers that everyone is safe.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain best protocols to ensure security plans remain confidential for the safety of the public.

Combating Swatting Attempts



Memorandum of Understanding

All italicized sections are considered instructions and should be deleted prior to the submission of the final MOU.

This is a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** for providing services for the upcoming

_____ *Election Name/Event*

This memorandum aims to establish an understanding between

_____ *Election Office or Jurisdiction*

and

_____ *Partnering Agency/Company*

to ensure the safety, security, and smooth operation of the election process.

OBJECTIVE

This MOU aims to outline the framework for providing support and protection at various election sites during the specified period.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The overarching goal is supporting and protecting election officials in the orderly conduct of the election.

- _____ may provide a pre-election security walk-through
Partnering Agency/Company

of key election sites to identify vulnerabilities that the election office can address and

familiarize _____ personnel with election sites and staff.

Partnering Agency/Company

Memorandum of Understanding



Crisis Communication Intake Forms

Crisis Communications Intake Response Form

Criticality Level (select one):

ELECTIONS HQ PHYSICAL SECURITY

ROUTINE MODERATE SEVERE

Use this form to help your office respond to critical incidents.

Incident: _____ Date/Time of Incident: _____

Details: Include any relevant details that may be helpful as you and your team continue to respond to the incident.

Who to Notify: Include complete contact information for those who may need to be notified about the incident.

Internal Contact Name	Phone Number	Email	Notified?

External Contact Name	Phone Number	Email	Notified?

Holding Statements: Use this section to adapt these holding statement templates for the incident at hand, or use numbers 4 and 5 to craft new statements. Holding statements are short and concise and are a way for you to notify the press and public of an emerging incident.

1. _____ is aware of a potential security threat occurring at the main elections office at _____ Election Office. We are working with _____ Address Partner Agencies to address the situation. A lockdown order has been issued, and the building will continue to follow strict security protocols until law enforcement has cleared the threat. More information can be found at _____ Website.

2. _____ is aware of a potential security threat occurring at the main elections office at _____ Election Office. As a result, _____ Address Partner Agencies have ordered the immediate evacuation of the premises as law enforcement works to clear the threat. Mail ballot processing will continue to take place at a secure location. More information can be found at _____ Website.

ELECTIONS HQ PHYSICAL SECURITY

The Elections Group

3. Due to _____ Incident _____ Election Office has been advised by _____ Partner Agency to relocate services from the main elections office to _____ Location at _____ Address until the office is secured. At this time, voters are encouraged to visit other voting locations and visit _____ Website for more information.

4. _____

5. _____

Next Steps: Use this section to detail next steps in managing the crisis or incident.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Press Conference Plan (optional): Hosting a press conference during a crisis can assist with delivering your consistent core message to multiple reporters at one event. Create a general plan for press conferences to maintain preparedness and continuity.

Date & Time	Location	Statement? (Y/N)	Speakers	Q&A? (Y/N)

ELECTIONS HQ PHYSICAL SECURITY

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Tabletop Exercises, De-Escalation Training, Political Violence, & Law Enforcement Training, Facilitation at the State, County, and Local Levels

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