

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## Summary

There are many scenarios, both natural and man-made, that warrant taking precautions and making preparations to prevent, mitigate, and recover from an emergency situation that may disrupt an election.

In 2007, the State Elections Board prepared a report and made recommendations with respect to state, regional and local election-related contingency planning efforts and preparedness. This report covers both large-scale and limited-scope natural disasters or technological threats that may occur at or near election time. A copy of this report entitled, *Report on Election-Related Contingency Planning* can be found on the agency website.

## Procedures

Municipal clerks should ensure that each municipality has an Election Day emergency response plan. Contingency plans should be reviewed with election inspectors as part of the clerk's pre-election training. Efforts should be made to have back-up election inspectors that are knowledgeable of Election Day procedures and on call in the event of an illness or other unforeseen incident.

We encourage you to share these plans with your county clerk as well as with your local emergency response crews such as the police, fire, and emergency government departments.

The plans should be updated annually or more frequently as needed. A complete sample plan can be found in the *Report on Election-Related Contingency Planning* available on the agency website. These plans should, at a minimum, provide for the following:

1. Normal Operating Procedures;

The plans should include a briefing on the normal election-related processes.

## 2. Troubleshooting For Common Emergency Scenarios;

- a. The plan should provide appropriate responses to the most common emergency scenarios, such as a fire or fire alarm, inclement weather, or electrical outage.
- b. Plans should include evacuation and emergency shelter locations specific to each polling place.
- c. Contact numbers should be provided to election inspectors for local emergency response such as the police, fire, and emergency government departments, in addition to the polling locations' building maintenance personnel (if applicable) and the municipal clerk.

**Note:** The third page of the *Election Day* manual, "Election Day Contacts," provides space to list these numbers and should be completed before Election Day.

## 3. Handling of Election Materials;

- a. Plans should detail the proper procedure for securing unmarked ballots, voting equipment and ballot boxes, and poll lists in an emergency situation.
- b. Responsibility for securing materials should be assigned before Election Day.

## 4. Alternate Polling Locations.

- a. Arrangements for alternate polling locations should be established before Election Day in the event of a permanent evacuation.
- b. Reasonable effort should be made to ensure accessibility and proximity to the original polling location.
- c. Whenever it becomes impossible or inconvenient to hold an election at the designated location (inclement weather, bomb threat, etc), the inspectors may adjourn to the nearest convenient place. The inspectors must make a proclamation of the move, and a law enforcement officer or other designated person must be stationed at the former site to notify electors of the move. The procedure for adjournment to an alternate site is prescribed and outlined under §7.37(1), Wis. Stats.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What happens if an emergency occurs at the polling place on Election Day and the inspectors need to move locations?*

Wisconsin Statutes detail the procedure for adjourning to an alternate polling location in the event of an emergency. §7.37(1), Wis. Stats. The municipal clerk should always consult with the State Elections Board before moving a polling location.

## List of Related Forms and Publications

All forms and publications are available on the agency website or can be ordered from the State Elections Board.

### *Manuals*

Election Day Manual

### *Other Publications*

Report on Election-Related Contingency Planning

