



Election Security

Standing up to
Intimidation, Preventing
Overt Attacks

NO
ELECTIONEERING
WITHIN 100 FEET

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Understanding the Guide



We developed this guide to assist election officials in planning defenses against threats from individuals, organized groups and spontaneous groupings. These threats may challenge the order, safety or procedural integrity of the central election office, counting sites, drop boxes, other high-profile election facilities and even voting sites.



The Elections Group, 2024

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This document was created as part of the Election Superheroes Project, with the help of current and former election officials around the country, for the benefit of all current election officials. Election officials are superheroes!

Background

We have seen, and fear we will see again, overt security events: intentional efforts and opportunistic attempts to use an intimidating presence, lodged threats and even violence to influence and alter election procedures and outcomes.

Potential threats exist across a continuum. An angry individual or distrustful observer could disrupt election activities. A group could arrive at an election facility without disruptive intentions. Anxious, misinformed cynicism from electors at a voting facility can channel rumor, innuendo, misunderstanding and anger, generating a mob mentality. More intentional groups, ranging from supporters of a candidate to self-styled militia and other extremist groups, may also attempt to gain influence over processing or voting facilities and procedures. The impact of intimidation at a voting site may be local and involve lower numbers, but ripples of news and gossip can spread fear in the broader community. A strong and immediate response can help calm concerns and limit the damage.

Election officials must protect facilities over which they have varying degrees of control, these range from central sites, typically owned by the jurisdiction, where mail ballot handling, tallying and other administrative processes may take place, to mail ballot drop boxes in open public space, to private and government buildings used as voting sites.

Since the contours of vulnerability rise and fall with factors such as the number of ballots, the timing of work and the potential for undermining voter morale and confidence, these factors will shape an administrator's planning. Mail ballots may be the target of protest due to the novelty of mail voting in many states and the unwarranted suspicions raised about mail ballots when many voters relied on them during the pandemic. Attention on the mail ballot count is likely to peak in the jurisdictions where a small number of votes cast may be decisive, increasing public focus, tension and the potential for risk.

Central count sites require significant, focused preventive planning, including the hardening of both physical and human defenses. Protective efforts to harden the defenses may be made public without going into the specifics to avoid allowing disrupters to devise ways of circumventing security. Election officials must consider ways to harden physical defenses and make plans to deter, de-escalate, defend and mitigate damage without excluding observers, who are essential participants in elections.

The risk of intimidation of election workers or violence directed at voting or ballot counts remains low in most jurisdictions, even in a turbulent time in the United States. We do not mean to suggest that overt threats to the election are likely for any specific office. We offer this guidance because preparedness will help you reassure voters and workers, deter and de-escalate threats and ensure an attack would not succeed.

*To address heightened election security risks, a number of prominent election officials and key law enforcement figures have come together to form the **Committee for Safe and Secure Elections**, (safeelections.org). CSSE creates a community where the officials from each sector come together to discuss election safety and provide materials to support mutual efforts at security.*

Risk Management Approach

Election officials are advised to take a risk management approach, focusing attention and resources on high-risk locations such as central offices, ballot counting facilities and drop boxes, as well as assessing voting sites by the expected number of voters there. Fortunately, officials have significant levels of control over central offices and counting facilities and can therefore institute mitigation measures. We include a Checklist (**Appendix A**) to help election officials take steps to address any vulnerabilities, safeguard their facilities and prepare their staff.

This paper does not offer guidance to address covert physical threats, such as theft, infiltration, tampering and vandalism, although the topics overlap. Such risks have been addressed by many authorities, and election officials in need of such guidance can consult **Appendix B - References for Preventing Cyber and Covert Attacks**.

Coordinated Planning

Coordinate planning in these six areas:

- Staff and Poll Worker Guidance
- Conduct of Election Observers
- Legal Advice and Attorney Authority
- Facilities Preparation
- Law Enforcement and Security Staff
- Communications

Bringing together representatives involved in each area of each group for a coordinating meeting or call will help to ensure that each group understands the needs of other participants.

Election procedures and the viewpoints of staff and poll workers will need to shape the law enforcement response, and the perspective of law enforcement and security help guide election administrators as they develop procedures and guidelines. Inviting training staff or others in close contact with poll workers can help to ensure their viewpoints, which may differ from election administrators, are represented.

Staff and Poll Worker Guidance

Staff and poll workers, especially those working in central facilities, have two critical goals: **managing the relationship with observers**, to ensure disruptions do not escalate and **breaking up disruptive crowds** by pulling individuals and small groups into separate spaces.

To achieve these goals, staff and poll workers first need training and resources to manage intimidation in election facilities that address these principles:

- Security, Support and Seeking Protection
- Command of Relevant Law and Procedure
- Transparency
- De-Escalation

Security, Support, and Seeking Protection

Poll workers and staff must be trained to be vigilant. Greeters and frontline staff need to watch for behavior that looks unusual. Anything that feels unusual, suspicious or threatening must be reported up, at minimum to senior staff in the office or to law enforcement.

A two-person rule (or “buddy system”) can provide security and reassurance. If a situation becomes contentious, staff or poll workers call in a colleague — their buddy — for support, to serve as witness and to help document the incident afterwards.

Standing up to fear tactics gives voters a sense of security and protect the integrity of the election. If staff and poll workers are unequipped to handle a situation, consciously or unconsciously bending the rules or shortcutting procedures may feel like the only options for diffusing it.

Election officials must provide effective training on processes and ensure that staff and poll workers are confident that they will be supported and protected when they rely on their training. That means empowering them to manage and de-escalate situations and to call for help if they feel intimidated or they see voters who are intimidated. That includes calling law enforcement directly, if necessary.

Election officials must relay to staff and poll workers that it is acceptable to call law enforcement when necessary. Provide staff and poll workers with phone numbers for local law enforcement.

Command of Relevant Law and Procedure

Poll workers with a thorough command of election procedures, who communicate confidently about them, can deflate an upset observer or partisan.

One of the most critical procedures to understand will be the distinction between observation and disturbance. The role, rights and responsibilities of observers are well defined in most states. Those who push beyond appropriate roles are creating a disturbance and can be warned or removed.

Ensure that poll workers understand state law and regulations regarding challenges to a voter's right to vote. The circumstances for challenging a voter, who may do it, and how poll workers resolve these issues vary by state. Unsupported challenges by an election observer that unduly delay legitimate voters may create grounds for removal.

Highly visible and easy-to-read signage about voter intimidation laws will help voters and poll workers recognize behavior that is not permitted and will be addressed.

Transparency

The strongest argument for transparency is to ensure that American elections are secure and honest. Demonstrating open processes and strict adherence to rules and best practices can dissolve cynicism and attempts at misinformation. Some of the discussion in this guide treats the relationship with observers as adversarial, and it can be. But election officials and workers must always keep in mind the important role observers play.

De-Escalation

Dealing with unruly and overzealous voters and observers is all in a day's work for election workers. But the continuing climate of distrust could make these encounters more volatile.

Training staff and informing poll workers of these de-escalation tactics can help keep contention from spilling over into conflict:

- Speak in a calm voice and use body language that communicates that you are confident the observer will be satisfied once you explain how procedures ensure the integrity of the vote.
- Conduct yourself with firm but polite professionalism to help defuse disruptive situations.
- Remember that even angry observers are usually acting in good faith. This may help you understand and successfully address their concerns.
- Communicate in a manner that demonstrates you are taking the concern seriously, such as “I want to make sure we know exactly what happened here, so everyone is satisfied that we’ve handled it correctly.”
- Be specific when explaining law, local practice and procedures so that voters and observers know the rules and their boundaries.

Managing Relationships with Observers

Serious conflicts may develop through the escalation of normal observer conflicts and misunderstandings in the context of heightened distrust, anxiety and high stakes.

Always keep in mind that the right to observe helps to establish the fairness of an election; observers see for themselves that elections are honest. Election observation builds trust and helps to enforce the rules that maintain it. In contrast, attempts to limit observation inevitably undermine public trust.

Administrators must clearly communicate and enforce rules for election observers to prevent disruption, allowing voting, the vote count and legal observation to continue.

Recommendations include:

- Creating a formal intake process for observers, including all statutory forms and procedures. If permitted by statute, ask observers for ID (with an alternative for those who lack ID).
- Developing a color-coded system of badges on lanyards to distinguish roles or access, with corresponding signage indicating which color badges have access to each area.
- Requiring a signature on a declaration form disavowing any intent to disrupt election workers or legitimate processes.
- Providing training if possible, or guidance materials on standards of behavior for observers to avoid conflict over uncertain rules.
 - Even where the right of observation is not limited to those sponsored by a candidate or party, it may be possible to require or strongly encourage an understanding of procedures being observed before being admitted.

- Assigning a particular staff member to serve as a liaison to observers.
- Defining supervision and authority ahead of time. Layers of authority will allow defense in depth, giving front line staff the option to refer complaints to a higher level. Because this strategy can risk distracting senior managers too quickly, consider the option of artificial authority, where a staffer refers a disruptive person to a colleague who is not actually senior, but can speak more firmly.
- Promptly addressing observers who are loud or disruptive, even in small ways, since the behavior can be contagious, drawing in a crowd.

It is appropriate to maintain boundaries with observers. While you should strive for transparency and open communication, observers may not have the right to quiz you on topics unrelated to the tasks at hand. Where appropriate, you may direct observers to your open records policy or invite them to participate in public comment periods.

If health or fire codes limit the number of observers allowed in an election facility or room, consider how to manage the impact.

Consider meeting with your fire chief regarding room capacity. Determine how the addition of equipment, tables and shelving impacts a safe capacity, and establish a room capacity for the workspace.

Remember that the right of observation helps to allay the concerns of skeptics. If you must keep some observers out due to room capacity, work to ensure that different constituencies are represented by those who remain. This will reinforce the understanding that the election is run honestly.

Breaking Up Unruly, Disruptive Crowds

It is possible that a group may gather spontaneously at a voting location or election facility, without intention of formal observation. One of the dangers of larger groups of people is their volatility and susceptibility to rumor.

Below we discuss strategies that may be helpful in disrupting potentially unruly crowds:

- Accommodate Legitimate Concerns
- Direct Focus Towards Legal Procedures

Recognize Concerns

The intentions of many people coming to an election facility will be to assure that voting or vote-counting is conducted honestly, even if they bring mistaken preconceptions about you, election workers and the process as a whole. Helping them understand that rules are carefully considered and rigidly enforced, and offering appropriate opportunities to observe, if legally permissible, may ease hostilities and help ensure that people remain calm.

If you are made aware of planned demonstrations by a specific group, reach out to them to introduce yourself and develop a rapport. Provide instructional resources that detail what type of demonstrations are allowed and where at each election facility. Take time to point the individuals to resources that explain the laws and safeguards taken to secure the voting process. Performing this outreach can be beneficial, especially if a situation occurs that requires follow-up.

Direct Focus Toward Legal Procedures

A critical risk factor is the susceptibility of crowds to rumor. Provide facts and focus by directing the group's attention to legal procedures and lawful opportunities to observation and make complaints. We recommend creating written guides to procedures that are not so long as to be overwhelming, but with sufficient detail that they require some sustained focus. Printed materials help group members to focus on understanding your procedures and provide a constructive topic of conversation for the crowd.

Let workers know you've planned for their safety, including routing them through a secure alternate entry/exit if possible, escorting them to their vehicles and ensuring they can drive away in security.

Legal Advice and the Authoritative Presence of Attorneys

Bringing an attorney into consultations on security plans and responses to intimidation and violence will ensure that policy responses do not cross legal lines or infringe on rights. Formal opinions on the legality of your security policies will lend support and strengthen their impact if you need to apply them. And an attorney on scene can sometimes provide an authoritative voice that will help resolve difficult situations.

Consider seeking written legal opinions on these and other questions to help reinforce your policies and procedures:

- The number of people allowed in election facilities.
- Who is allowed in the polling location.
- Whether filming, audio recording or photography is allowed and in what context.
- What types of disruptive behavior can lead to expulsion from an election facility, such as noise, crossing physical distancing lines or other barriers, or repetitive unsuccessful challenges or complaints.
- The legality of firearms in and around voting sites and other election facilities.
- Whether voters waiting in line outdoors are protected by rules on electioneering.
- Whether visitors or observers may be asked to sign a declaration explicitly disavowing any intention to disrupt poll workers or influence them on questions of legal procedure.

Explain policies to staff and poll workers. Consider the following:

- Printing relevant legal opinions on jurisdiction letterhead for distribution when the polls are open.
- Creating signage to help reinforce legal boundaries and restrictions for observers and other visitors.
- Acknowledging that the display of weapons may create legitimate concern, even if that display is legal, and explaining the alternatives available under state law to election workers who feel intimidated.

Invite your attorney to participate in security planning and meetings with law enforcement, as well as work on-site at your central count facility on Election Day, and beforehand if desired. The authoritative presence of an attorney and the deference many people give to lawyers can help enforce these and other policies in election facilities when disputes arise. Depending on the assessment of need, it may also be useful to supplement any jurisdiction attorney(s) with outside lawyers on call to travel to if there is a disturbance.

Facilities Preparation

Security-related preparation of voting sites may include marking off observer areas (if possible), since enforcing these limits may help reduce the number of people in an unruly crowd.

Where possible, consider posting poll workers as greeters inside and/or outside the entrance. Training them to identify early signs of problems will be beneficial. While greeters handle expected tasks like answering typical voting questions, they can also monitor the line for contentious situations that could escalate, or suspicious activity that could signal someone has cruel intentions.

At the central office and mail ballot processing site, facilities preparation will be a critical component of security preparation. Address the following issues:

- Traffic control around the facility.
- Protecting the vehicle zone, entrance and receiving area where tally cartridges, secure ballot bags and other secure election materials are received.
- A check-in desk with security staff to control observer and public entry into the facility.
- A neutral space outside or beyond the check-in desk, to prevent crowds from forming at the check-in desk itself.
 - For instance, have security staff at a door, allowing a limited number of people in to have their ID examined at a check-in desk.
- Internal control points around tally computers and storage areas.
- A designated room away from the check-in area that senior staff can use to separate unruly crowds into smaller groups or meet with observers or leaders of observer groups.

Posts or bollards, partitions and line ropes on stanchions can be useful in defining space for these needs.

Test security cameras ahead of time to ensure they are working. Increase coverage with additional cameras if time and resources permit. Video coverage can also be used to supplement those observers permitted inside facilities.

If protest outside becomes raucous, consider insulating the workspace by drawing shades, closing internal doors to reduce sound and taking other steps to diminish the distraction and ensure that election work continues.

Let workers know you have planned for their safety, including routing them through a secure alternate entry/exit if possible, escorting them to their vehicles and ensuring they can drive away in security.

Law Enforcement and Security Staff

While much of the discussion above has focused on managing unruly individuals and crowds to prevent situations that could intimidate election workers, election officials today must recognize that attempts at intimidation may occur spontaneously or when groups intentionally come to disrupt the legal process.

Careful planning with law enforcement and security staff will be necessary to ensure that such attempts fail. The first step is simply reaching out to all relevant law enforcement and security agencies to establish a relationship. Create documentation that informs them of the types of scenarios that may need to be addressed. Include legal advisers in calls and meetings so you can be sure that law enforcement is aware of election statutes, their interpretation and controlling authority.

Ask law enforcement about their preferred mode of communication for election incidents. Given that election scenarios are unique and high profile, is 9-1-1 the best path? Should the election administrator have a direct line? Should key staff have direct lines to a dedicated dispatch staffer? How should poll workers best relay their concerns over developing situations? Once you've clarified the response, make sure all staff and poll workers have the appropriate number, ideally keyed into their contact list.

Elections may be an unfamiliar context for law enforcement. Help them understand the boundaries between a legitimate complaint and disruption in the election context. It may be useful to engage law enforcement agents in training exercises and role-play some observer-poll worker disputes and other election situations.

Voting creates restrictions on otherwise broadly respected rights. For instance, many states with open carry laws still have tight restrictions on guns in or even near voting sites.¹

So, this is also an opportunity for you to learn about law enforcement's protocols and standards to respond to incidents. You might not know immediately if police are dispatched to a polling location. Public safety is paramount to law enforcement. It might be beneficial to learn those situations where officers may respond regardless of election activity.

Ultimately, law enforcement and security staff may be needed to deter intimidation, and possibly to address threatening individuals and intimidating groups. At the same time, as past events have shown, a persistent law enforcement presence can itself feel overbearing to some voters, so law enforcement election activity must balance competing demands in the very different settings of voting sites and offices and central count facilities.

In a central count facility, where there is little if any risk of intimidating voters, and the risk of interference may be greater, visible law enforcement personnel will deter interference and address unruly behavior promptly.

At voting sites, an ongoing law enforcement presence may be neither justified by the relatively low risk profile, nor constructive. Instead, law enforcement must be reserved and prepared to respond and address disruptive behavior at voting sites. To deter interference, I advise communicating that readiness to the public, perhaps through a statement by the election administrator or a joint statement with law enforcement, describing behaviors that will not be tolerated in or around voting sites and emphasizing that law enforcement will respond.

If known threats emerge, election officials need to evaluate the benefits of a more visible law enforcement presence, from more regular patrols past voting sites, to brief or even consistent posting of law enforcement at voting sites most in need of protection. The goal, of course, is to ensure that workers and voters feel safe, supported and protected.

¹ In *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc., et al. v. Bruen, Superintendent of New York State Police, et al.*, the Supreme Court affirmed that polling places were "sensitive places" where states might prohibit the presence of firearms.

If intimidating situations develop, law enforcement will need to act. Here again, it is likely useful to role-play the types of situations that might develop and how law enforcement might act to address them while maintaining the ability of election officials and workers to do their jobs running the election. Even in addressing a disturbance, law enforcement will need to distinguish between those creating the disturbance and legitimate participants and observers, to avoid undermining trust in the election.

In other years it might have gone without saying, but it seems necessary to make it explicit that only constituted law enforcement agencies and security staff with a legal relationship to the jurisdiction can play a security/law enforcement role. Privately formed militia are explicitly outlawed from being present in or near voting sites in most if not all states.

Communications About Deterring Intimidation

It's important to note that almost by definition, public opinion in your area will overwhelmingly support the counting of all your jurisdiction's votes according to established legal procedures. Any effort by intimidating groups to bias the count is likely to be met with public disapproval.

It may be useful to speak to the media about legal procedures and law enforcement support before Election Day. Let people know the election office will follow the law meticulously and that law enforcement is ready to support the office in protecting the election.

A key strategy is to “speak to the skeptics.” People bring many preconceptions to their understanding of the fairness of elections. Address any rumors you hear. Explain how the law and your own procedures prevent the kinds of violations alleged and establish election integrity.

The best way to speak to skeptics may be by enlisting bipartisan voices to support the election office and the legal procedures for counting ballots. A copy of The Elections Group publication *Managing Expectations for Election Results* (see **Appendix B**) offers more ideas for communicating with election stakeholders in ways that help them appreciate the integrity of the process.

We recommend not to publicizing insignificant incidents or those that you have not yet fully addressed to avoid creating undue alarm and magnifying the intimidation intended by the people creating the disturbance.

Potential Scenarios

These scenarios address major disruptions and potentially dangerous situations that could take place. They are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive, and the lessons of these scenarios can be applied to other election facilities and incidents.

- Situation 1: Angry Observers Disrupt the Mail Ballot Count
- Situation 2: Intentional Disruption at the Central Office
- Situation 3: Disruptive Individual at a Voting Site

Situation 1: Angry Observers Disrupt the Mail Ballot Count

Disruption: The ballot counting facility is a location of heightened interest, curiosity and concern. In this scenario, we envision a spontaneous incident in which observers believe they have seen an effort to subvert the count. They raise an unruly protest that intimidates staff and could lead to loss of control of the facility. In addition to the direct impact on people present, the uncertainty threatens chain of custody and ballot supervision and could undermine the effort to count all ballots.

Background and Preparation: Election officials have ensured that all people present have checked in, shown ID and signed a declaration that they will observe without being disruptive. Video cameras cover all aspects of the mail ballot count, for the purposes of election observation and also security. Law enforcement is on hand. Layers of supervision are in place so a pair of senior staff can address the situation. An attorney with election experience is also on hand. A separate meeting room is available.

Approach: Supervisors ask law enforcement to call the room to order. The command is that everyone must be silent and sit or remain calm, on penalty of expulsion. If any threatening action has occurred, remove those involved. Once order is restored, the senior election

official explains in a calm voice that concerns will be addressed, but that the proceedings must not be disrupted. Pause proceedings while pulling witnesses into the meeting room to hear a calm recitation of the complaint. If necessary, seek video footage of the incident. Explain procedures and develop a response. Meanwhile, explain to other observers that the count will go on. If anyone has violated significant rules (or their declaration to observe without being disruptive), ask law enforcement to remove them. Slow things down temporarily to allow closer observation, because this tends to defuse tension among remaining observers. Given the possibility that another disruption could take place, seek additional law enforcement support going forward.

Situation 2: Intentional Disruption at the Central Office

Disruption: Protesters, some wearing campaign gear, carrying signs, and waving large banners, are chanting and screaming loudly outside the central election office. Protesters in cars and trucks are honking, adding to the noise and chaos. The central office is the site of the mail ballot count, the early vote and Election Day tally data uploads, and the storage of all voted ballots. A central group of protestors seems intent on encroaching upon protected space around the office, including both the entrance where election materials are received and the neutral zone around the check-in desk for observers. Some are calling for an end to ballot counting and complaining that ballots not yet counted are not legitimate.

Background and Preparation: The election office created a vehicle buffer zone using bollards. They used a rope line to create a neutral zone outside the main entrance and security desk where observers must check in. Law enforcement is on hand. Election staff are at the security desk to help assess the situation. An outline of the process for counting mail ballots has been printed in bulk. The election administrator had recruited contacts from both major parties to be on hand.

Approach: Elections and security staff must seek back up because a serious situation is developing, which could require a strong law enforcement presence. If law enforcement judges the situation safe enough, and with their support, a team of two election staff approach the crowd and speak politely but firmly to make clear that the right to

protest will be respected, but protest activity must take place outside the marked, designated boundaries. If possible, representatives from both political parties will speak to the importance of following legal procedures to count all valid ballots. Tell the crowd that observers are on hand to make sure legal procedures are being followed. Offering copies of the outline for mail ballot processing can help focus the protesters attention on what the law allows and requires. Appeal to the protesters who want to support their candidate, but who do not support disruption. They are free to protest in a designated, visible area away from the entrance.

If the intimidating behavior continues, law enforcement will need to address the protesters, explaining that the building will be locked down to ensure the safety of the count, and expressing determination to see that legal procedures for counting ballots are upheld. They should continue to stress outlets for protesters who are not interested in disruption, with a goal of separating disrupters from peaceful protesters.

Because the rope line is not a truly defensible boundary, staff and law enforcement should prepare to retreat to the building entrance, lock it and secure it. A similar decision may need to be made about the receiving entrance if it is also threatened. Notify poll workers bringing materials from outlying sites of the disruption and, if possible, provide a law enforcement escort to the receiving entrance.

Situation 3: Disruptive Individual at a Voting Site

Disruption: Protesters, some wearing campaign gear, carrying signs and waving banners, approach the polling location. A visibly tense individual wearing a shirt with a candidate’s name enters the voting site, bypassing the lines. Near the check-in tables, he begins asking voters who they are voting for and whether they have ID, making loud allegations of fraud, he follows a voter to a voting booth.

Background and Preparation: The election office assigned two greeters to the voting site. The office provided poll workers with some guidance on tactics for de-escalation, as well as phone numbers for building security and law enforcement. Poll workers have thoroughly explained the rules of observation and provided copies of a guide for observers. During training, poll workers role-played a similar incident and agreed on a code phrase (“Is John here?”) to prompt colleagues to call law enforcement.

Approach: The greeters recognized the developing situation, called building security and then followed the disruptive person into the voting area. Making eye contact with poll workers inside, they decide to address the disruptive individual and calmly but firmly instruct him to step aside away from the voting area. The greeters ask if the disruptive person is an approved poll watcher in the jurisdiction (if state law requires this), offering the Guide for Observers and asking that it be read. The disrupter is not an official poll watcher but nonetheless claims to have come on behalf of a candidate and states that he will call the candidate if he is not allowed to continue. State law (in the state envisioned in this scenario, though not in every state) creates a right of observation not limited to sponsored poll watchers. The greeters explain that people have a right to observe, but not to speak to voters in a voting site or interrupt the normal legal procedures, which are being followed.

Building security has now arrived, putting the election workers on firmer ground. They let the disruptive person know that if he does not comply with observer and electioneering rules, he will need to leave the voting site. If he complies, he can stay and observe.

The disrupter does not comply, so building security asks him to leave. One of the greeters asks colleagues at check-in “Is John here?” triggering a call to law enforcement. The situation remains contentious, even after a final warning that law enforcement has been called, which gave the disrupter another chance to back down. Greeters step back and ask building security to remove the disrupter.

The rest of the poll worker team focused attention on keeping voters safe, so voting could continue. They briefly stopped checking voters in and asked everyone to remain calm.

Poll workers notify the central election office and document the situation on a standard incident-reporting form or affidavit. When law enforcement arrives, they ask whether they can file a formal complaint. And they ask security staff to remain on hand for some time after the incident to ensure the disrupter does not return.

Appendix A: Checklist for Preparedness and Prevention

Create an Intra-Agency Security Team and Arrange a Conference Call

- Invite representatives from facilities, poll worker training and communications units, as well as senior elections staff, attorneys, contracting security firms and law enforcement.

Prepare Election Facilities in Advance

- Develop or enhance capacity to provide for online observation of election processes.
- Set location capacity limits and clearly post those limits for each work area and for the entire facility.
- Secure entrances, including vehicle/receiving entrances. Use rope lines, bollards and other barriers as necessary.
- Create secure areas and delineate boundaries for observers within the facility. Create color-coded badges for roles within the facility.
- Create signage detailing observer rules.

Train Staff and Communicate with Poll Workers

- Reiterate observer rules, distinguishing observation from disruption.
- Set behavioral norms on noise, filming and other criteria that help workers distinguish legitimate observation from disruption.
- Provide de-escalation tips.
- Create a Guide for Observers and a Guide to Mail Ballot Processes.

- Provide phone numbers for emergency response when necessary. Emphasize that you recognize that they may need to call security or law enforcement directly if they feel threatened.
- Let staff and poll workers know you prioritize their safety.

Set Law Enforcement Relationships and Expectations

- Build a relationship with law enforcement command. Seek advice and build a cohesive plan.
- Brief building security staff and municipal or county law enforcement on election policies.
- Request a direct line to designated command or dispatch personnel to ensure prompt and appropriate response.
- Determine best points of contact between law enforcement and different levels of election staff.

Ask Communications Staff to Prepare to Address Disruption

- If the election office has no communications staff, seek outside assistance. Develop holding statements on disruption in advance.
- Share information with outside groups to further understanding of election law and procedures.
- Issue a statement to the news media regarding partnerships with law enforcement and describe behaviors that will not be tolerated in or around voting sites.
- Seek bipartisan support that you can call on in a crisis.

Get Legal Advice and Support

- Seek supporting legal opinions on key questions.
- Print copies to distribute to disruptive observers and visitors.
- Coordinate a pool of attorneys available to travel to address disruption on site, during early voting and on election day.

Appendix B: References for Preventing Cyber and Covert Attacks

Physical Security Preparedness at Voting Locations and Election Facilities (CISA)

www.cisa.gov/publication/physical-security-voting-locations

Fact Sheets on Law Relating to Militias (Georgetown Univ. Law School)

www.law.georgetown.edu/icap/our-work/addressing-the-rise-of-unlawful-private-paramilitaries/state-fact-sheets/

Fact Sheet on Voter Intimidation (Georgetown Univ. Law School)

www.law.georgetown.edu/icap/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/10/Voter-Intimidation-Fact-Sheet.pdf

Guide for Election Observers (Orange County, CA)

<https://ocvote.gov/election-library/docs/November%202020%20Observer%20Handbook.pdf>

Guide to Physical Security (US Election Assistance Commission)

www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/6/260.pdf

- This is one chapter of a larger guide.
- It takes an IT-security focus but has relevance for broad physical security questions.

Cyber-Security Tool (US Election Assistance Commission)

www.eac.gov/app/esa/survey

Observer Laws and Policies by State (National Conference of State Legislatures)

www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/policies-for-election-observers.aspx

Election Observer Guide (Arapahoe County, CO)

www.arapahoevotes.com/watchers

Managing Expectations for Slower Election Results in 2020 (Elections Group)

<https://electionsgroup.com/assets/Managing%202020%20Expectations.pdf>