

REMINDERS AND PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Drop Box Resilience

Is your office prepared for an incident that compromises a ballot drop box?

Drop boxes are used in many states and jurisdictions as a way for voters to return their mail/absentee ballots. The Department of Homeland Security recently shared that ballot drop boxes are potentially susceptible to physical attacks. Attacks could potentially destroy voted ballots or render the drop box unusable.

Plan ahead. Attacks, accidents, and weather emergencies could all disrupt drop box use and mail ballot returns. Knowing how you will respond and timely communicating your contingency plan can instill certainty and confidence amongst voters and candidates. This is especially important if voters need to take additional steps to ensure their ballot is counted.

As part of your resiliency planning, we recommend the following:



OPERATIONS

- Maintain complete and timely record keeping of drop box retrieval activities.
 - Audit chain of custody periodically to ensure staff compliance
- Retrieve contents daily; more frequently at peak times.
 - Adjust retrieval times to avoid an observable pattern that bad actors may take advantage of.
- Establish security camera coverage of boxes where possible. Cameras provide:
 - Deterrence
 - Identification of offender
 - Exact timing of event
 - Close estimate or count of affected ballots
- Review security footage to confirm functionality and practice accessing, downloading and saving footage, working with IT or vendor staff as necessary.
- Hold a reserve dropbox to deploy a replacement if necessary.
- Brief emergency responders.
 - Request routine patrol checks from local police.
 - Provide out-of-office contact info.
 - Describe election chain of custody requirements and ballot acceptance deadlines.
 - Consider and address conflicts with an investigatory chain of custody.
- Have a plan and sufficient supplies to duplicate damaged ballots.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Prepare a news release if there is a security incident at a drop box, reassuring voters that:
 - Voting and ballot processing will continue as normal.
 - The incident is isolated (provide an exact or approximate count of ballots impacted and total ballots received and outstanding).
 - Emphasize the security and receipt of the remaining ballots.
 - There is a plan in place to notify impacted voters and explain their options for voting.
- Include the following information in your news release:
 - Drop box location
 - Date and time of the last pickup
 - Date and time of the security incident
 - Any changes to drop box availability
- Inform voters how they can verify the receipt of their mail ballot.
 - If possible, set up proactive communications such as text alerts for received ballots.
 - If the information is already publicly available, amplify your mail ballot return reporting.
- Inform impacted voters how they can still vote. Emphasize the method (e.g. replacement mail ballot or provisional ballot) and important deadlines (e.g. “Impacted voters must still return their replacement ballot no later than 7pm Election Night”).
- If the situation permits you to issue automatic replacement ballots, use an insert to explain to each voter why they received a replacement ballot and what steps they need to take.
- Communicate to voters the current security and monitoring in place for drop boxes.
- Prepare a one-pager or talking points to explain your duplication process for damaged ballots.
- Prepare a one-pager or talking points to explain your process for ensuring only one vote is counted for each voter.