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# Five Steps to Stronger Emergency Management Partnerships for Election Officials

*Adapted from the [Committee for Safe and Secure Elections](#) and builds on our work for the report [Fostering Resilient Elections: Opportunities for Stronger Election Administration and Emergency Management Collaboration](#)*

Election officials and emergency managers are both responsible for keeping essential community functions operating — especially during high-stakes moments like elections. As natural disasters, infrastructure failures, and public-safety concerns become more frequent, stronger collaboration between these two groups is critical for resilient and uninterrupted election operations.

The following five steps outline how election officials and emergency management partners can work together to build trust, strengthen preparedness, and ensure continuity under any conditions.

## 1. Meet Early and Regularly

Bring emergency managers into the election planning process from the start.

- Build relationships with your county or municipal Emergency Management Agency,
- Include directors, planners, and operations staff in order to institutionalize the relationship
- Schedule follow-ups as needed to strengthen planning, and before each major election.
- Share why election operations need dedicated emergency planning and how even small disruptions can impact voting.
- Identify shared concerns (e.g., severe weather, power outages, evacuation plans, active threats, transportation disruptions).
- Discuss roles and expectations during both routine operations and emergencies.

## 2. Share Information and Situational Awareness

Open communication creates a clearer understanding of risks and responsibilities.

- Provide emergency managers with election timelines, facility locations, storage sites, transportation plans, and any unique vulnerabilities.
- Learn how the EMA monitors threats and communicates with partners during incidents.
- Exchange 24/7 contact information and clarify who is reachable during nights, weekends, and early voting periods.

### 3. Agree on Roles, Boundaries, and Support Needs

Define how collaboration will work in practice.

- Map out which responsibilities fall to election officials and which support roles emergency managers can provide.
- Establish boundaries for how emergency managers assist at polling places or election facilities, keeping voter experience and legal requirements in mind.
- Identify community groups or partners that need to remain informed when emergency conditions affect election events.

### 4. Plan Together for Disruptions and Crisis Communications

Joint planning ensures a coordinated response during high-pressure moments.

- Draft or update incident response plans that reflect real risks to election operations (weather, cybersecurity incidents, public-safety concerns, utility failures).
- Discuss needed back-up resources, to determine what support the EMA can provide
- Determine how both offices will share information during an incident — including what triggers alerts, who activates response plans, and how decisions are documented.
- Develop coordinated crisis communications so messages to the public are consistent, timely, and supportive of election continuity.

### 5. Practice Through Exercises

Rehearsing scenarios reveals gaps and strengthens coordination.

- Hold regular check-ins throughout the election cycle to discuss new risks or upcoming milestones.
- Conduct tabletop exercises involving election officials, emergency managers, communications staff, and other relevant partners.
- Practice everything from information flow to facility impacts, relocation plans, and messaging — building muscle memory for real-world incidents.
- Take training related to the other agency or even play a cameo to learn about it – for instance, election officials and staff helping cover emergency call centers; and emergency managers serving as poll workers or election day oversight staff.

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Original link: <https://electionsgroup.com/five-steps-to-stronger-emergency-management-partnerships/>