



EARLY VOTING PLAN

# NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION

NOVEMBER 3, 2020

Office of Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes  
& the Maricopa County Elections Department



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## Early Voting Plan Overview

The Maricopa County Elections Department Early Voting Plan outlines the background, constraints, strategies, and tactics that staff will use to prepare for the upcoming 2020 **November General Election**. Pursuant to the Arizona Revised Statutes, the elements of this plan are directly under the purview of the Maricopa County Recorder and the Director of Early Voting and Election Services. In the spirit of collaboration and coordination, this plan was developed in conjunction with the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan prepared by the Director of Election Day and Emergency Voting and approved by the Maricopa Board of Supervisors in September 2020.

This plan serves to ensure that the Recorder's Office and Elections Department provides voters with a reliable, secure and accessible Voter Registration and Early Voting process for the General Election. This plan also provides to the Board, Maricopa County voters and key stakeholders information related to Voter Registration and Early Voting activities with the goal of transparency and increased voter participation in the election. The Recorder's Office and Elections Department is committed to improving the voter experience and increasing voter turnout by providing the most accessible and voter-centric voting processes available.

## Voter Registration and Eligibility for the November General Election

The Recorder's Office is the custodian of the voter registration database for the County and, as such, is committed to a robust education and communication effort in order to help all voters understand the unique registration and eligibility rules of each election. The voter registration deadline for the November 3 General Election is October 5, 2020. If a voter wishes to participate in the General Election, they must register to vote on or before October 5, 2020.

Though address and name changes can be updated at the voting location environment via our SiteBook check-in system when voting in person, by law, political party changes cannot be made after the October 5 deadline.

All registered voters are eligible to participate in the General Election and there are no unique requirements for independents like there are in the Primary Election. All voters on the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) who have had their address verified through the US Post Office, will be sent an early ballot. Additionally, all voters who are not on the PEVL were sent a PEVL request form in September to allow easy selection of this option if desired.

## Early Voting

Arizona state law has allowed "no excuse" absentee voting for over two decades and this voting style is referred to as "Early Voting" and "Vote by Mail" in our state. In light of COVID-19, the Recorder's Office and the Maricopa County Elections Department want to ensure all voters are aware of their voting options for the upcoming elections. Whether the voter decides to vote by mail or in-person, our goal is to provide safe and accessible choices that make it easier for a voter to participate. On the Early Voting side of providing options, a voter can request a one-time Early Ballot mailing or sign up for the Permanent Early Voting List

(PEVL) by visiting [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://www.maricopa.gov/BeBallotReadyVote). Voters on the PEVL are sent ballots by mail automatically for every election in which they are eligible to participate.

To expand upon the early voting option, a voter can as always make a one-time Early Ballot request to have a ballot mailed to them but just for a specific election, without having to sign up to permanently have ballots mailed. However, for those voters who do want to have a ballot sent to them automatically for every election in which they are eligible to vote, a Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) **“Online Portal”** was developed earlier this year to offer a secure yet simpler way for a voter **to sign up for this status**. Previously, Maricopa County voters could only sign up for the PEVL with a paper form or online through the state Motor Vehicle Division website via a process more specifically designed for registering new voters. Now already registered voters have another option to meet their needs.

In addition to being able to visit [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://www.maricopa.gov/BeBallotReadyVote) to make any of the above selections, voters can also visit [Request.Maricopa.Vote](https://www.maricopa.gov/RequestMaricopaVote) to go straight to the **“One-Time Request”** option or the new **“Permanent Early Voting List Request”** page.

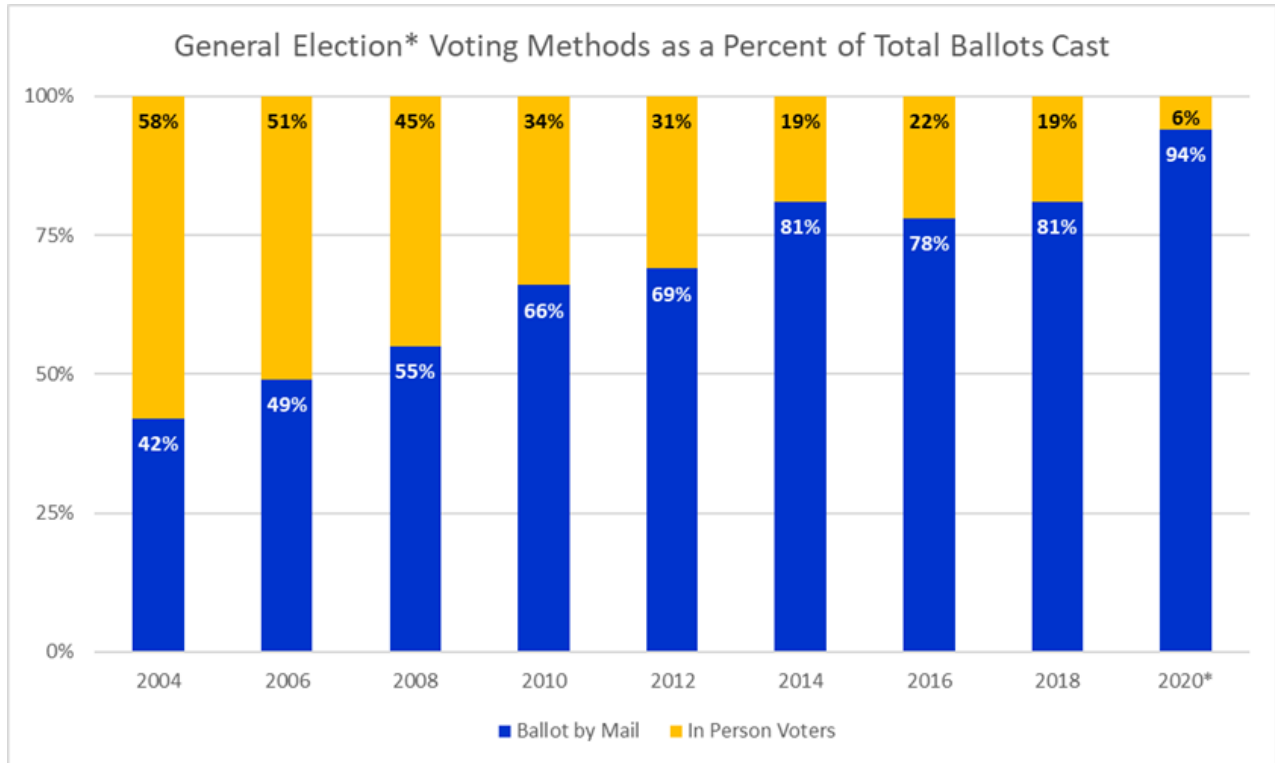
Maricopa County’s voters historically vote early by mail in large numbers. Currently, 78% of all active voters are on the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) and that number has grown by 258,520 since January 2020, most notably in the past few months presumably due in large part to COVID concerns. Additionally, as of September 13, there were 28,423 voters who requested “one-time” mail ballots just for this election season.

In recent countywide and federal elections, voters on the PEVL turnout to vote in proportionately larger numbers than those voters that are not on the PEVL, traditionally making up a larger percentage of the overall vote. In the August Primary election, 93.94% of ballots cast were early/mail voters.

The popularity of Early Voting among Maricopa County voters continues to hold steady and appears to be trending-up in smaller turnout elections, such as a primary.

Election and year	Total number of votes cast in that election	Number of early votes cast (by mail or in-person)	Percentage of total votes that came from early ballots
2016 PPE	621,976	533,772	85.8
2016 Primary	555,844	485,221	87.3
2016 General	1,608,875	1,251,975	77.8
2018 CD 8 Special Primary Election	116,732	108,238	92.7
2018 CD 8 Special General Election	184,201	164,939	89.5
2018 Primary	699,636	598,154	85.5
2018 General	1,454,103	1,184,261	81.4
2020 PPE	732,376	321,870	89.8
2020 Primary	860,704	808,572	93.9

Below is a graphical representation of turnout for past elections that shows the upward trend and popularity of the Early Voting Ballot by Mail process (blue) versus the In-Person Voter turnout (gold).



2020\* Figures from 8/4/20 Primary Election

## Early Voting Laws and Key Dates

By state law, the Early Voting period begins 27 days before Election Day for both mailing and in-person early voting. For the upcoming November 3 General Election, that “27 days before” falls on October 7, 2020. Early ballots are mailed out on this date and will begin to arrive in eligible voters’ mailboxes as soon as October 8, 2020. State law requires that all voted ballots be received back by 7 p.m. on Election Day and the US Postal Service recommends that ballots be mailed at least 6-7 days before Election Day to guarantee timely delivery. Due to recent concerns raised in the media about post office delays, the Elections Department will advise voters this election to put their ballots in the mail 7 days before Election Day, which is October 27, to ensure delivery by Election Day. We are also incorporating more education in our advertising and community outreach about the ballot drop-off option to ensure voters know they have an alternative way to deliver ballots back to the Elections Department for processing if they prefer not to use the post office delivery system.

Ballots received after Election Day, even if they are post-marked as mailed on Election Day, are not valid by law and are not counted. Traditionally, a proportionately small number of ballots are received after Election Day despite robust efforts to educate voters about the recommended mailing timelines (approximately 1,500 ballots in each of the last two General Elections were received late, or roughly 0.1% of votes).

## In-Person Early Voting

As stated above, in addition to returning ballots by mail, voters have several options to submit their completed early ballot including:

- Dropping off voted ballot sealed inside the signed affidavit envelope at any Early Voting location
- Utilize ballot drop-boxes located throughout Maricopa County, including Vote Centers on Election Day
- Vote early in-person

Considering the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 virus, the Elections Department, in partnership with and support of the Maricopa County Recorder’s Office, is again utilizing a “vote-anywhere” Vote Center model for Election Day, complimented by 27 days of Early Voting. All voting locations will be open, on a phased in schedule, for in-person early voting and ballot drop-off. Voters will be able to choose the date, time, and location that is most convenient for them to vote during this General Election season.

There will be between 165 and 175 Vote Centers available on Election Day, November 3, 2020, with 145 to 160 Vote Centers that open prior to Election Day through a phased approach to significantly expand early voting options. These locations will be open for weekend voting on Saturday, October 24 for Early Voting and on Saturday, October 31 and through Monday, November 2 for Emergency Voting. Each phase will see an additional number of in-person early locations open from that scheduled date through Election Day. The phased opening schedule for the geographically dispersed Vote Centers is listed below. A final list of Vote Centers and hours of operation will be published at [Locations.Maricopa.Vote](#) approximately 40 days before the election.

There will also be 25 – 35 secure drop box only locations where voters can drop their early ballot off without having to visit a vote center or their local mail-box. As many as 5 – 10 of these locations will be drive through drop boxes staffed with poll workers. These drive through locations will allow voters to deliver their early ballot directly us without having to leave their vehicle. The drive through locations will be open on Saturday October 24, 2020 and again Saturday October 31, 2020 – Tuesday November 3, 2020.

Phase	Number of “Vote Anywhere” Vote Centers	Scheduled dates
Phase 1	6 Vote Centers (28-day sites)	Open 10/07/2020 - 11/03/2020
Phase 2	44 additional Vote Centers (13-day sites)	Open 10/22/2020 - 11/03/2020
Phase 3	40 additional Vote Centers (7-day sites)	Open 10/28/2020 - 11/03/2020
Phase 4	60-70 additional Vote Centers (2-day sites)	Open 11/02/2020 - 11/03/2020
Phase 5	10-20 additional Vote Centers (1-day sites)	Open on Tuesday, 11/03/2020 (Election Day)

## New Early Voting ID Requirements

Due to a change in law during the 2019 legislative session, voters voting early in-person will be required to show identification the same way that is required on Election Day at a voting location. Though the law has been on the books for over a year, this requirement will be new to many in-person early voters who only vote in Presidential year General Elections. Poll Workers in Early Voting centers and Special Election Board staff who assist voters to cast early ballots will be trained on this requirement. The new ID requirement for in-person Early Voting does not alleviate the requirement that a voter sign the affidavit envelope for an early ballot, and the Elections Department is still required to verify the signature on that affidavit envelope before tabulating the ballot.

## Early Vote Processing

For the General Election, early ballots will be automatically assembled and mailed out to all eligible voters on the PEVL. The number of voters receiving early ballots for this election is approximately 1.9 million voters. With the active campaign to inform voters of their voting options (early by mail, early in-person and in-person on Election Day), we expect to see an increase in use of the early voting by mail process in both PEVL signup and one-time mail ballot requests. For planning purposes, the Elections Department is preparing for up to 2,004,614 voters in the General Election which is 79.8% of the 2020 Projected Voter Registration total at 2,512,000. Using this high-end forecast will ensure enough resources are allocated and available to efficiently and quickly process early ballots received by mail or dropped-off, and to accommodate voters who choose to vote in person either during the Early Voting period, emergency voting or on Election Day. Based on past voter behavior in the recent past elections, we are further preparing for up to 84.4% of the votes (or up to 1,691,069 ballots) in the General Election to be cast early by mail, in person or dropped off on Election Day.

Number of Projected Registered Voters (Active Voters Only)	Turnout Percentage Overall (Active Voters Only)	Anticipated turnout in November 3 General (for planning purposes)*	Anticipated number of early ballots to be cast based on 84.4% early vote estimate (for planning purposes)*
2,512,000	79.86%	2,004,614	1,691,069

*\*The Elections Department looks at past voting data and assumes an enhanced level of voter participation to ensure staff and other resources are available to accommodate the highest level of potential voter participation. More information about the voter turnout model is detailed in the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan. These figures should not be construed to be official voter turnout predictions.*

The Early Voting program creates a large volume of mail and all ballot packets must be carefully accounted for. The Elections Department and our printing and mail-processing vendor, Runbeck Elections Services (Runbeck or RES), maintain a very close and positive relationship with the US Postal Service facility to ensure mail and postal issues impacting the sending or receipt of ballots can be quickly identified and addressed.

As early ballots are returned by mail, Elections Department staff pick-up the mail from the USPS and deliver it in hand-documented batches to Runbeck. Upon receipt, Runbeck conducts an inbound sort of this mail to place these packets into an automated batch system and scans each affidavit envelope received, capturing a digital image of the voter signatures on those ballot packet envelopes. To ensure all ballots are accounted for, the batch system is continuously audited systematically in addition to being validated by Elections Department staff and Citizen Boards through audit tray reports that accompany the batches. After the initial inbound scan pass, Runbeck then stores the unopened ballot packets in their facility in a secure, water and fireproof room, while Elections Department staff review the digital images of voter affidavit signatures – thus eliminating the need to handle the actual physical ballot packet multiple times.

Once signatures are verified for a given digital batch, the disposition is sent back to Runbeck to perform a sort on those corresponding ballot packets to create actual physical batches of the packets based on their status (e.g. Good Signature, No Signature, Need Packet, etc.). Those physical batches, with matching audit reports inserted in each batch, are then secured for transport by Elections Department staff back to our Maricopa County Tabulation and Election Center (MCTEC) facility for future processing and tabulation. The delivery and receipt of ballot packets between the Post Office, Runbeck and MCTEC happen on a regular and



regimented schedule to ensure that processing timeframes needed to tabulate ballots in a timely manner can be maintained.

At the staffing levels anticipated for the General Election, the Elections Department can process in a regular shift up to 90,000-110,000 ballots daily to prepare them for tabulation (e.g., sorting, signature verification, removing from the envelope). This processing activity includes the individual verification, referenced above, by trained staff of the signature on each affidavit envelope to ensure it matches a signature on file for the respective voter that returned the ballot. Four permanent and 27 temporary staff will be dedicated to this Signature Verification work for the General Election, but several other Recorder's Office and Elections Department staff will need to take a break from their regular job duties to work for a few hours on Signature Verification each day to meet the 90,000-110,000 daily processing goal.

Additionally, the early vote ballot processing requires a methodical separation of those affidavit envelopes from each ballot to ensure ballots are anonymous when tabulated. This separation process is done by hand, by Citizen Boards consisting of two people each representing different political parties. For the General Election, there will be 50 boards of two people each and three room attendants (or 103 temporary employees) assigned to this task. As ballots are separated from envelopes and prepared for tabulation, ballots are kept in batches for organizational and review purposes. Continuous audit of the batches and process steps ensure that all ballots are accounted for.

In addition to the processing work described above, Elections Department staff respond to a very large volume of voter inquiries by phone, email and social media, "flagging" concerns about their early ballot delivery (such as address issues) or requesting one-time delivery of a ballot by mail for non-PEVL voters. The Flagging staff also proactively reach out to voters when staff identify concerns about a signature or other ballot packet validation issues in order to resolve issues in time for the voter's ballot to be counted.

Voters do not return ballots in consistent numbers over the course of the 27-day Early Voting period of any election. Though recent concerns raised in the media about post office delivery delays may impact this trend, it is likely that we will see a substantial portion of the early ballots returned, being returned closer to Election Day and dropped-off on Election Day at the various Vote Centers.

The Elections Department is gearing up for large numbers of ballots to be returned in the week before the election and dropped-off on Election Day. On average, approximately 30% of all early ballots returned for a given election are received in the last few days leading up to the election. Using the high-end early ballot return forecast noted earlier at 602,276 early ballots for the General Election, 30% of that would be 180,683. With the Elections Department able to process 100,000 ballots per day, we then are set to handle upwards of 600,000 early ballots within the 3-6 day closing period, which is more than projected.

In the 2018 General Election, we received approximately 180,000 (15% of the total 1.2 million early ballots) ballots ("late earlyies") by mail the day before the election or early ballots dropped off at the polls. If we conservatively assume that 20% of early ballots will be "late earlyies," we will need to count approximately 360,000 - 400,000 ballots after Election Day. Early ballot processing (e.g., sorting, signature verification, removing from the envelope) can take 3 -5 days to process 400,000 ballots. Given the processing capacity of 90,000 - 110,000 ballots per-day, coupled with the tabulation capacity of 215,000 ballots per day, we estimate to have counted 99% of all ballots within five business days after the Election. Since the new

equipment is not limited in memory and bandwidth, we can implement separate shifts if turnout exceeds expectations or to decrease the number of days needed for counting.

## Vote by Mail Ballot Security

Though Arizona voters have cast ballots by mail without evidence of fraud or security concerns for over two decades, recent media reports have heightened public concern about these issues. Maricopa County employs several strategies to protect the integrity of vote by mail ballots and ensure the program is safe, transparent and accountable.

Specifically, voters on the PEVL who have been deemed inactive under the terms of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), due to at least two pieces of mail being returned as undeliverable, are not sent ballots. This federal law prohibits forwarding of election mail so that a voter must update their address to keep their voter registration current. This requirement is designed to prevent voters who have moved or who are deceased from being sent ballots. However, even if a voter is erroneously sent a ballot packet due to a delay in postal record updates, there is a signature check done on 100% of all returned early ballot packets to ensure that ballot can't be cast by a stranger. All returned mail ballots must be enclosed in the affidavit envelope issued to the voter that contains a unique Piece ID barcode printed upon it. This affidavit envelope must then be signed under the penalty of voter fraud, by the voter. Those signatures are compared to the known and verified signatures on the voter's official voter registration record.

Once the signature has been verified and it has been determined that the voter who should have received the ballot returned the ballot, a series of bipartisan citizen boards are used to further process the ballot by removing it from its envelope so that it can be counted anonymously. If the ballot is damaged or stray marks cause it to not read properly on the initial run those ballots would be sent to bipartisan duplication or adjudication boards to review prior to tabulation.

As for transparency, voters can use a special texting service created by the Recorder's Office in 2017 to track the status of their ballot to ensure it is being sent and be notified when the ballot has been received by the elections department, signature verified and tabulated. To sign-up for this texting service, voters should text JOIN to 628-683. The alerts can also be received by email.

## Special Programs

In addition to the standard Early Vote program available to all voters, the Elections Department administers two special programs designed to facilitate voting for special populations. The **Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) program** provides military personnel (domestic, out of county and stationed abroad) as well as any eligible voter overseas (temporarily or indefinitely), extra time to receive and return their ballots. As required by federal law, ballots are mailed or otherwise delivered to UOCAVA status participants 45 days before the election, allowing voters in distant areas of the world extra time to receive and return their ballot. Ballots must be received back to the Department by 7 p.m. on Election Day for these and all early voters.

Pretrial detainees and other inmates in correctional facilities whose voting rights have not been terminated due to a felony conviction may request their ballot be mailed to them at the facility. The Recorder's Office

and Elections Department works with the County Sheriff's office to ensure detainees are able to make phone calls to the Elections Department to discuss their ballot request free of charge to the detainee.

The Elections Department also administers the **Special Election Boards (SEB) program**, designed to assist individuals who have a disability, are ill, institutionalized or otherwise incapable of traveling or using the traditional Early Voting process to cast or mark their ballot. Under this program, a Special Election Board, made up of two individuals of different political parties, will offer the voter options on casting their ballot. In response to COVID-19, the SEB program will be expanding the voting platforms available to voters. Voters may choose to cast their vote in person, or on a video call. The types of voters the SEB teams typically serve are those that live temporarily or permanently in nursing homes, hospitals, and homes or institutions for people with disabilities or those who cannot live independently.

## Processing Provisional Ballots and Curing of Signature Issues

The Recorder's office is also responsible for researching voter information for any provisional ballots cast on Election Day and determining if those ballots are eligible to be counted. Provisional ballots are provided to voters who vote in person but do not have the required ID or there is a question about their eligibility to vote. Voters casting provisional ballots often end-up in standard categories for each election regardless of the type of election, such as "not registered" or "registered too late/after the cutoff."

For any ballot cast in person where sufficient ID was not provided in accordance with A.R.S. 16-579, the voter will have five business days after Election Day to present the required ID to validate their conditional provision ballot. For this General Election, the deadline to show sufficient ID is 5:00pm on November 10, 2020.

Any early ballots that are received by 7 p.m. on Election Day with signatures that are inconsistent with the elector's signature (questionable) must be researched and reasonable efforts must be made to contact the voter. We will advise the voter of the inconsistent signature and allow the voter to correct or the County to confirm the inconsistent signature. State law (A.R.S. 16-550.A) allows voters up to five business days after a primary, general or special election that includes a federal office, such as the General Election, to "cure" their signature on ballots where the signature validity is in question. For this General Election, the deadline to "cure" the inconsistent signature is 5:00pm on November 10, 2020.

The extra "cure" time allowed to voters, coupled with the time needed to research and process the above noted post-election provisional ballots or questionable signature ballots, may result in an extended ballot-counting timeframe

## Voter Registration Clerk (VRC) Training and Certification

Detailed staffing plans for voting locations are contained in the Election Day and Emergency Voting plan. The SiteBook check-in system will be utilized in all in-person voting locations to speed-up and enhance the voter check-in experience. The SiteBook was created by the Recorder's Office IT and Elections Department in 2017, and is the recipient of the National Association of Counties' Achievement Award for Innovation. In addition to the traditional Poll Workers that will be hired and trained by the Elections Department's Recruiting and Training Division, every voting location will have at least one "Voter Registration Clerk" (VRC). The VRC will be

certified by the Recorder's Office to assist voters who need to update or make corrections via the SiteBook to their name or address on their voter registration record.

The SiteBook is an "ePollbook" that is securely tied into the County voter registration system through a virtual private network (VPN) to provide the list of all eligible voters at every voting location. Additionally, the SiteBooks, with direct access to the voter registration data, allow the VRC and other trained poll workers to make updates to the voter's residential address to ensure that the voter always receives the correct ballot that corresponds to their current address. Coupled with the use of Ballot on Demand (BOD) printers that print the correct ballot as needed at the voting location, this bolsters the security of the election, significantly reduces the number of provisional ballots needing to be cast by voters due to being out-of-precinct, needing a name change, address change or having to vote a provisional ballot simply for requesting an early ballot and not returning it.

With the combination of new provisional processes and real-time verification using the SiteBooks and comparing "General Elections" to "General Elections", we went from 122,524 provisional ballots in 2012 down to 16,409 in 2018. An even more promising statistic is that in the recent August 4 Primary, we only had 1,793 provisional ballots cast. Moreover, the use of the Ballot on Demand (BOD) technology eliminates the waste of leftover pre-printed ballots that previously had to be securely shredded and recycled. Use of the SiteBook also allows workers to see, in real time, whether a voter has already voted by mail or at another voting location. This ensures that even with multiple "Vote Anywhere" voting locations on Election Day and even with 78-80 percent of Maricopa County voters requesting to have ballots mailed to their home from PEVL or one-time requests, that no voter would be able to vote twice in an Election.

The VRC position will be certified by the Recorder's Office because this staff person will have special access to the voter registration database. Though the Board of Supervisors has statutory authority over the staffing and general operations of the Election Day polling places, the Recorder's Office is the legal custodian of the County's voter registration records and ultimately is responsible for the integrity of the voter registration database. The VRC position will bridge the two areas of statutory authority to provide the best voter registration service to voters in the voting location on Election Day. The training and certification process will provide accountability for the integrity of the database and the SiteBook will provide an auditable trail of any voter information changes made by the VRC and other Poll Workers. Though the VRC will be the primary staff person in the polling place performing this function, in order to provide back-up, at least one other Poll Worker will be trained and certified.

The VRC position will also be trained in other general polling place duties and will work in partnership with the other Poll Workers to administer the Election Day tasks. Training will cover emergency procedures and how to implement the sealed "Break-in Case of Emergency Kit." This kit includes emergency voter check-in procedures, blank paper check-in roster, transfer tickets, and transfer forms. In the event there is a loss of power or connectivity, the VRC will assist the other Poll Workers in checking-in and processing voters with these paper materials.

The Recorder's Office administers a Deputy Registrar program (explained in more detail in the Communications and Community Outreach section) which trains voters who wish to assist with public voter registration efforts. Deputy Registrars are encouraged to take on the VRC positions due to their familiarity

with voter registration issues. Poll Workers who are not Deputy Registrars, however, are eligible to serve as the VRC as long as they complete the special training and certification process.

## Communications and Community Outreach Plan

### Introduction

The following communication plan outlines the Recorder's Office's communications and community outreach approach to educating Maricopa County voters during the November 2020 General Election. The purpose of this plan is to outline strategies and tactics that help the team accomplish the following communication goals:

- Encourage voters to check their voter registration and verify their information is correct.
- Inform voters of their options to vote by mail or in-person, in light of COVID-19
- Promote the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) and one-time early ballot request portal
- Ensure voters know to mail back their ballot in a timely fashion or drop the mail ballot off at a voting location or drop-box
- Educate voters on the security measures in place to protect the integrity of mail voting
- Educate voters about the elections planning process and increase transparency

The Recorder's communications and community outreach staff will implement specific communications and outreach strategies to educate voters about their early voting options. Additionally, the Recorder's Office will work closely with the Elections Department communications team to collaboratively manage and strategically plan the November 2020 Voter Options campaign. This joint effort between the Recorder's Office and the Elections Department ensures consistent, accurate, and reliable information is disseminated to the public. Furthermore, this collaboration will help amplify a uniform message that emphasizes the options voters have this year to vote early by mail or in person.

Along with goals and strategies, this plan highlights the following:

- Official Communications Channels
- Voter Options Campaign, Approach & Strategy
- Early Voting Strategy
- Earned and Paid Media
- Social Media
- Targeted Voter Communication
- STAR Call Center
- Voter Outreach and Community Relations
- Crisis Communications Planning

### Official Communications Channels

The public and the media can find official communications from the Recorder's Office and the Elections Department through the following channels:

- Website:
  - [Recorder.Maricopa.Gov](https://Recorder.Maricopa.Gov)
  - English – [Maricopa.Vote](https://Maricopa.Vote) | [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://BeBallotReady.Vote)
  - Spanish – [Maricopa.Voto](https://Maricopa.Voto) | [TengaBoletaLista.Voto](https://TengaBoletaLista.Voto)
- Social Media:
  - Recorder’s Office: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)
  - Additional information may be shared from Elections Department ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#))
- Phone: 602-506-1511
- News Releases and Media Alerts
- Recorder’s Email Newsletter

## Voter Options Campaign, Approach & Strategy

In light of COVID-19, it is critical that Maricopa County provide voters with a safe and secure General Election. We understand that now, more than ever, voters need flexibility to choose how they would like to vote—whether in person or by mail at home.

The Recorder’s Office shares a campaign messaging strategy with the Elections Department that communicates how Maricopa County is making it easier for voters to choose how and when they want to vote. The November 2020 Voter Options campaign incorporates both Early Voting and Election Day messages as a comprehensive November General Election plan.

The Early Voting Plan outlines the strategy to inform voters about their options to sign up for a one-time early ballot or permanent options to vote by mail at home. With COVID-19 precautions in place, the communications strategy will also inform voters about in-person voting available for all our Early Voting and Election Day sites. See the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan for more information.

Additionally, the strategy will educate voters on timely return of mail ballots and ballot drop-off options. With recent media reports about potential post office delays, ensuring voters know how to return their ballot in time for it to be counted is of particular importance.

In particular, the primary audience for this communication plan is as follows:

- All eligible Maricopa County voters
- Maricopa County residents who are eligible to vote, but are not yet registered
- Non-PEVL voters who may be interested in requesting a ballot in the mail
- Historically underrepresented, underserved, and disenfranchised voters
- Voters who have a vote by mail ballot and need to return it in a timely fashion

## Early Voting Strategy

COVID-19 has created several concerns for public health and has raised specific considerations for government functions, including elections. During this on-going health crisis, the Recorder’s Office understands that voters need flexible options to meet their voting needs. While the Voter Option campaign emphasizes both in-person and ballot at home options, the Recorder’s Office will be especially engaged in

promoting early voting. In particular, the communications team will promote the recently created Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) portal.

## Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL) Portal

Maricopa County voters can visit [Request.Maricopa.Vote](https://Request.Maricopa.Vote) in English or [Solicitud.Maricopa.Voto](https://Solicitud.Maricopa.Voto) in Spanish to sign up for the PEVL or a one-time mail ballot for the primary and general elections.

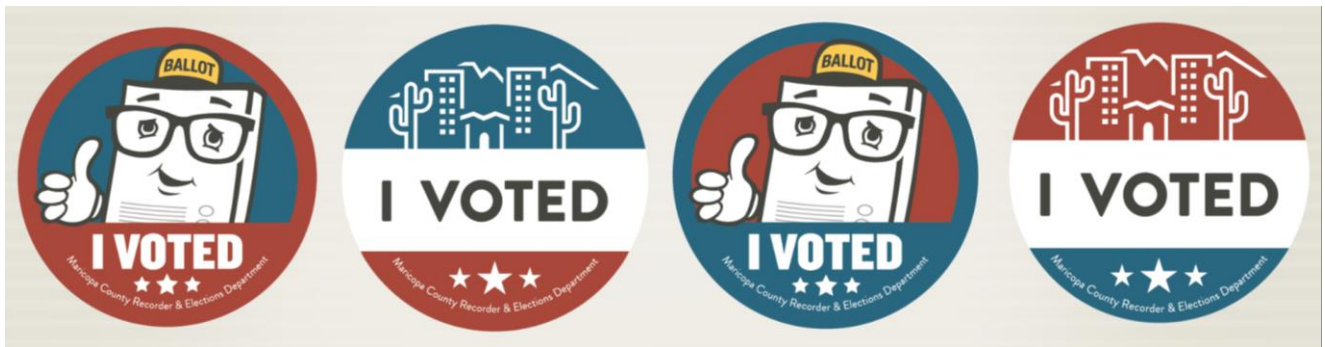
To continue to educate the public about their early voting options, the Recorder’s Office will:

- Hold Facebook Lives and pre-recorded videos focused on voter registration and early voting options.
- Push social media content about the online PEVL portal.
- Share a social media toolkit (created with Elections Department communication staff) with community organizations and agency partners that includes digital collateral emphasizing Voter Option campaign overarching messages.

Beyond the PEVL portal, voters can find important information about the upcoming election on two other critical web pages:

- [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://BeBallotReady.Vote): One-stop shop for voters to get their personalized voter information. The Election Day and Emergency Voting plan can provide more detail on how this platform can be utilized by voters. Additionally, the Early Voting strategy involves promoting [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://BeBallotReady.Vote) for voters to check their voter registration and request a one-time early ballot to voters who are not on the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL).
- [Locations.Maricopa.Vote](https://Locations.Maricopa.Vote): In collaboration with the Elections Department, we will promote this feature across all of our outreach. With a “vote anywhere” election model, this will be an important tool for voters to search and find Vote Center locations.

## “I Voted” Stickers



The Recorder’s Office and Elections Department implemented a plan during the 2020 August Primary Election to distribute a redesigned “I Voted” sticker to all voters that are on the PEVL or request a ballot by mail and this will carry forward for this 2020 November General Election. These stickers will also be provided to voters who choose to vote in person early or on Election Day. “I Voted” stickers are very popular with voters and instill a sense of civic pride and community awareness about voting. Several years ago, it was determined that providing stickers to early voters via mail ballot packets was cost-prohibitive. Recent upgrades in technology and printing and processing techniques make providing stickers in mail ballots more economically feasible. Maricopa County’s new “I Voted” stickers leverage and reinforce other messaging

themes and images (such as Phil the Ballot) that are included in the voter education and communications plan.

Including “I Voted” stickers in mail ballots also contributes to the efficient operation of in-person voting sites by reducing the number of voters that drop-off (instead of mailing) their ballot on Election Day to “get a sticker.” Fewer individuals in the in-person voting locations helps enable physical distancing protocols. Additionally, if voters who desire a sticker mail back their ballots instead of dropping them off on Election Day, those ballots can be signature verified, processed and tabulated in advance of Election Day, accelerating the ability to finalize election results.

The new “I Voted” stickers will continue to be promoted via social media strategies.

## Earned and Paid Media

Earned and paid media will be important to amplify awareness of early voting options. The Recorder’s communication team will use earned and paid media to reach as many voters as possible.

### Earned Media

The Recorder’s Office will be available to conduct media interviews to promote public awareness about voter options during this upcoming election.

- News Releases: The Recorder’s Office will send out news releases in collaboration with the Elections Department to promote elections deadlines, early voting registration, mail-in ballot requests, mail-in ballot deadlines, and polling locations and dates.

### Paid Media

The Recorder’s Office and the Elections Department contracted with Commit Agency through a Contract Task Order to develop a well-rounded paid media campaign for the November General Election. The approved budget includes funds for the creative design, production of advertising materials, and other costs associated with the marketing plan for all mediums in English and Spanish as well as direct ad buys in both English and Spanish across multiple platforms (television, streaming services radio, social media, digital display and billboards).

**This strategy has three phases:**

- Phase 1 (September 7 – October 5): Focus on voter registration, signing up to vote by mail at home
- Phase 2 (October 6 – October 19): Focus on safety and security of election as well a reminder to return the ballot by October 27.
- Phase 3 (October 20 – November 3): Focus on safe in-person voting and ballot drop-off options, including some nights and weekends, and the Election Department’s efforts to implement physical distancing and cleaning standards at voting locations.

## Social Media

The Recorder’s Office plans to implement a proactive social media campaign leading up to the November General Election. All social media content will serve to inform voters, cultivate conversations about relevant



elections topics, and continue to build transparency and increase voter satisfaction in the elections system. Our robust social media effort will include:

- Live and pre-recorded videos
- Visual collateral and graphics that promote the early voting, voting options, and access, security and safety at voting locations
- Status updates about early voting and the elections process
- Phil in the Blanks Video Series – In addition to informing voters of important deadlines and ways to participate in the General Election, the Maricopa County Recorder’s Office will work with the Elections Department to develop and share a series of informational videos (:60 - :90 seconds), with Phil the Ballot as our guide. Phil will highlight some of the most asked questions and share security and oversight into every video. The video vignettes will provide helpful information about the following:
  1. How to Vote by Mail
  2. How to Track your Ballot
  3. What is a Vote Center
  4. IDs at the Polls
  5. How to Return an Early Ballot
  6. Accessibility in Elections
  7. Watch a ballot as it is tabulated
  8. Early / Mail Ballot Security

### **Social Media Monitoring and Listening:**

As the campaign progresses, we anticipate an increase in social media activity, including questions and comments from members of the public as they relate to the election. In order to provide quality service to voters, the Recorder’s communication team will:

- Monitor social media comments
- Track public sentiment and make recommendations to fill information gaps
- Respond to questions with actionable voter information and resources

### **Targeted Voter Communications**

While social media, web, and paid and earned media are helpful tools to communicate to large audiences, the Recorder’s Office understands that it is essential in this election year to also provide tailored messaging to specific groups of voters in order to ensure they are informed of the options available to them for the General Election.

### **Direct Mailers**

- Ballot by Mail – Due to COVID-19, it is critical voters know all of their options. Since 1996, Arizona has provided all voters the option to vote by mail. The Recorder’s Office and Elections Department will send a PEVL sign up to all non-PEVL voters, informing them of their options and providing a direct way for voters to sign up to vote by mail at home.

- Sample Ballot – As outlined in the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan, we plan to use this mailer as a tool to inform voters of the Vote Center locations they can choose from and the extended evening and weekend hours available to them for both in-person voting and ballot drop-off.

## Email Communication

Non-PEVL Voters – We will send two emails to voters who have email addresses on file, informing them of their options and providing a direct way to sign up to vote by mail at home. As outlined in the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan, we will also send additional emails to these voters closer to Election Day to educate them on the Vote Center model.

## Text Messages

In an effort to ensure we meet voters on the platforms they are using, we plan to round out our voter outreach using the Twilio text messaging tool currently in place for voters to get early ballot status updates.

## STAR Call Center

The STAR Call Center is an important member of the Recorder’s Office and Elections Department Team. The STAR Call Center is a shared resource between the Maricopa County Recorder’s, Treasurer’s and Assessor’s Offices. They maintain a call center to serve all three offices. The STAR Call Center has seen a significant increase in volume around elections. As a result, they are planning an increase in staff to reduce wait times to speak to a live agent. Additionally, they are collaborating with the Recorder’s Office and Elections Department staff to ensure their recorded messages are up to date and accurately reflect information voters may be seeking.

## Voter Outreach Key Messaging Summary

Some of the key messages the Recorder’s Official proactive earned media strategy for the 2020 General Election may include are:

- Promotion of the [BeBallotReady.Vote](https://www.maricopa.gov/BeBallotReady.Vote) website and accompanying marketing materials (such as the new “I Voted” stickers and “Phil the Ballot”) as a vehicle to direct voters’ attention to key voter information;
- Promotion of voter registration, including deadlines and accuracy and completeness of voter registration on forms;
- Information about Early Voting, the Permanent Early Voting List and the ability of voters to make a “one-time” request for an early ballot for a specific election;
- Promotion of the Recorder’s Office text service that provides automatic updates on the status of a voter’s early ballot (text JOIN to 628-683);
- Information about the new ballot design and instructions for filling out the ballot;
- Education about Early Voting procedures and deadlines, including how and when to return early ballots, including ballot drop-off options;
- Information about Early Voting locations and education about the new ID requirements; and
- General information about voting administrative procedures and ballot processing.

## Community Relations Team (CRT)

The Community Relations Team (CRT) provides community-oriented voter outreach. Our purpose is to enhance and build further connections with community organizations, schools, businesses, political parties and other various sectors within Maricopa County. Through innovative communication and outreach strategies, the CRT creates an ongoing feedback loop with our community partners about important information from the Recorder's Office and Elections Department and shares pertinent community feedback with our office. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CRT has restructured our platform from in-person to virtual community outreach engagement. In an effort to continue to advance messaging and education about the General Election, the CRT is currently focused on the following goals:

- Engage and educate community organizations involved in voter registration efforts
- Enhance student outreach focused on voter registration, vote by mail options and voter ID education
- Inform community partners about all voter and PEVL registration services available
- Utilize Deputy Registrar volunteers for projects that will ensure voters are prepared to engage in the November General Election

## Student Outreach Campaign

The Community Relations Team has recently identified a need to specifically target college and university students to ensure that they are Ballot Ready for the General Election. Maricopa County has some of the largest community college and public universities in the country and many students reside in on-campus housing or stay in temporary accommodations during the school year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several schools have closed their physical campuses and moved instruction and services online for the foreseeable future. As a result, many students no longer reside where they were previously registered to vote and may not be aware that their registration may not be up to date. While the most likely impacted will be students who resided in on-campus housing, CRT believes that the communication should be expanded to all current college and university students.

Voter outreach in this model will focus on encouraging student voters to check their registration, re-register if necessary, and encourage students to sign up for the Permanent Early Voting List or request a temporary ballot as appropriate. If students choose to vote in person, they will be encouraged to educate themselves about specific voter ID requirements and what options they can utilize to meet ID requirements.

The CRT has identified the following outreach tactics in efforts to inform and engage our student voter population:

- Partner with Colleges and Universities, Political Groups and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Advocacy Groups
- Email Communications
- Spotify Radio and banner ads
- College-specific student portals
- Creation of the College.BeBallotReady.Vote portal to better service college students and address their unique questions

## Deputy Registrar Volunteer Projects

The Community Relations Team maintains a unique corps of non-partisan Deputy Registrar volunteers whose primary focus is to supplement our voter outreach efforts. These individuals are registered Maricopa County voters and are trained by the CRT and certified on aspects of voter registration. They support the County efforts at events, naturalization ceremonies and various voter education opportunities. The volunteers are currently executing two ongoing projects that directly impact voter access to the full Arizona General ballot and the timeliness of voter registration updates and operations. The two projects are:

- Phone banking Maricopa County Federal-only registered voters. Voters who did not provide proof of citizenship at the time of registration are only eligible to vote the Federal-Only Ballot (US President, US House, and US Senate). The Deputy Registrars are following-up on a letter sent to these voters providing them the opportunity to update their registration status with documented proof of citizenship. This would enable them to vote the full state ballot for the upcoming General Election. The call list consists of newly registered voters since June 2020. The phone banking project focuses on the following:
  - Confirm voter has received letter from Maricopa County enabling them to provide documented proof of citizenship ensuring access to full state ballot Confirm voter information and ensure any corrections are immediately transmitted to the Voter Registration Department
  - Respond to questions about the letter or documents required and document follow-up opportunities with the voter
- Mail sorting and voter registration form review
  - Ensure increased volume of mail is opened in a timely manner and categorized for expeditious processing
  - Review incoming voter registration applications for accuracy and ensure all mandatory fields are complete including documented proof of citizenship

## Other Community Relations Team Programs

In preparation for the General Election, the CRT will continue working with many nonprofit and political groups in addition to community leaders that are involved in large-scale voter registration efforts. These groups submit thousands of voter registration forms to the Recorder's Office and there will likely be increased efforts over the next few months in advance of the upcoming elections. Incomplete or incorrectly completed forms can lead to delays in processing the registration forms and may affect a voter's ability to cast a ballot. Therefore, educating community partners about this process remains a key objective of the CRT.

The CRT is planning virtual voter registration trainings throughout the month of September in addition to providing printable materials on the Recorder's website for groups to use in their voter registration efforts.

The Recorder's Office CRT may also provide additional assistance and resources to the Elections Department as is appropriate and coinciding with the strategic initiatives and goals of the Community Relations Team set for 2020.

## Crisis Communications Planning

Elections officials are facing new challenges in 2020. While the risk of attacks has increased public mistrust in elections generally, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an even more complex environment for managing public sentiment. Since 2017, elections have been categorized as critical infrastructure by the US Department of Homeland Security. Because of this increased vigilance towards maintaining the security of elections, the Recorder's Office is working to develop a comprehensive crisis communications response plan for a variety of high risk or potential threat/attack situations. This plan will entail:

- Pre-planned messaging for a variety of emergency situations
- Proactively creating educational tools and messaging to address issues that are creating voter uncertainty including post office delivery delay concerns and the security of vote by mail ballots
- Established protocols with partner agencies for releasing public information
- Plans for disseminating critical information through traditional media and social media

## COVID Safety Planning for Elections Department

The Elections Department partnered with the Maricopa County Department of Public Health to developed informed policies and restructured the MCTEC facility in ways that maintain the health and safety of the elections staff stationed at MCTEC. The plan includes strategies focused on the following:

- Providing education to staff to increase awareness on topics such as COVID-19 symptoms, appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
- Performing daily body temperature screenings prior to entering MCTEC.
- Documenting at a centralized check in and timekeeping station.
- Enforcing the face mask mandate.
- Creating centralized supply hubs equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items like masks, cleaning supplies, and gloves.
- Increasing access to bottled, wall mounted, and pop up containers of hand sanitizer.
- Installing portable handwashing stations.
- Increasing access to trashcans for the appropriate disposal of PPE
- Displaying visual indicators including wristbands, physical distancing tape, and mask required signs.
- Increasing daily cleaning of high touch surfaces and weekly deep cleaning.

## Risk Management, Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery

The Recorder's Office has developed this Risk Management and Contingency Plan in conjunction with the Elections Department's Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan to ensure a seamless structure and joint efforts. As stated in the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan, risk management is a continuous, forward-looking process that is an important part of conducting an election. Our Office performs risk management activities to identify potential risks that may adversely impact any part of the election process beginning with voter registration, and develop strategies that can mitigate these risks if they occur. Much of the risk

management and contingency plan outline for Election Day and Emergency Voting would be applicable for Early Voting, including Early Voting locations, and those same contingencies would be adopted.

In addition to the operations identified in the Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan, the following activities have also been identified as critical to the success of the election process and Early Voting:

## Voter Registration

Voters register to vote throughout the year, both as newly registered voters and existing voters updating their information, particularly their residential address. While the Recorder's Office works continually to keep these records up to date, these efforts are especially important as it gets closer to the start of Early Voting, even before the 29-day Voter Registration statutory deadline. In order for early ballots to be ready to mail out 27 days before the election, packets begin to be assembled approximately 52 days before the election. It is important for this reason that voter registration rolls be updated before this time, to ensure that voters on the PEVL receive the correct ballot in the mail. Additionally, this is the division responsible for researching and determining the eligibility of provisional ballots, so correct and current data is paramount to this process. The Voter Registration division has 17 permanent staff and a number of temporary staff who have their office in the Recorder's Downtown Office location. Because of COVID-19, most of these staff currently work from home. In the case that the Downtown Office became uninhabitable, and working in the office is needed, staff would be moved to the MCTEC facility, where computer and other office provisions could be provided to allow the division to continue with these vital activities.

## Early Voting Flagging and Signature Verification

As described in the earlier section, ensuring that voters' requests for early ballots are flagged and fulfilled quickly is required by statute. The four permanent and 27 temporary employees that fulfill this role are also tasked with verifying the signatures of the early ballot affidavits that are returned, and contacting voters regarding any signatures that are questionable. This work takes place across the 27 days that Early Voting is being conducted and ballots are returned to MCTEC for processing. Further, this work continues after the election for early ballots that are mailed in the final days leading up to the election and/or dropped off on Election Day. The team is also responsible for curing ballots with no signature and questionable signatures. The employees who conduct this work are located at the MCTEC facility. If the MCTEC facility became uninhabitable, staff would be moved to either the Recorder's Downtown Office location or the STAR Call Center workspace, where computer and other office provisions could be provided to allow the division to continue with these vital activities. Alternatively, some of these activities can be done working remotely from a home office and this would be employed where possible.

## UOCAVA Program

Similarly, the two permanent staff and 6 temporary staff that ensure our military and overseas citizens voters (*aka "Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act" qualified voters or UOCAVA Voters*) are able to vote, would be moved to our Downtown office and computer and other office provisions would be provided in the case that the MCTEC Election Annex where they regularly work became uninhabitable. The work of these employees spans a longer time-period before the election. They prepare ballots to be sent out to military and overseas voters beginning at least 55 days prior to the election and these ballots are sent 45

days before the election. This staff processes the return ballots during that 45-day period and through Election Day.

## **Printing of Ballots & Production of Early Voting Packets for mail out**

Preprinted ballots and early ballot mail-out packets including ballots, early ballot affidavits, and voter instructions, are printed and assembled at our current local vendor’s office, Runbeck Election Services (Runbeck). This location has state-of-the-art security as well as fire detection and suppression systems. If, however, this building became uninhabitable, our contract provides that Runbeck, through their Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) submitted as part of the contract, would be responsible for providing business continuity through local and non-local alternatives and facilities. The goal of a business continuity plan is to minimize disruption of all mission critical production process. Within Runbeck’s DRP, locations, materials and human resources are identified and outlined to ensure we are meeting all deadlines and conducting elections as planned.

## **Early Voting Supplies and Equipment**

If an Early Voting location’s supplies or equipment are missing or inoperable, Poll Workers, Trouble Shooters and Observers will use hotlines and newly established mobile applications to advise the Department. Replacement supplies and equipment will be dispatched from the MCTEC facility and other strategically established locations throughout the county that will serve as “supply hubs”.

The Department has addressed on-site contingencies with the use of multiple SiteBooks and ballot-on-demand (BOD) printers at our “vote anywhere” Vote Center locations. All Early Voting locations have at least six SiteBook check-in terminals, one accessible voting device and two BOD printers. If other equipment malfunctions, the MCTEC facility and supply hubs contain back-up equipment, which Trouble Shooters and other technical support staff will deliver.

In the case of a power outage, voters would be directed to other Early Voting locations until power could be restored. If the power outage covers multiple Early Voting locations or if the Early Voting Election Director decides it is advisable, the MCTEC facility and supply hubs will be outfitted with “emergency site kits” that include electric inverters (generators) that can be deployed to the Early Voting location.

## **Early Vote Center Poll Worker Absences and Emergencies**

The Election Department Division for Recruitment & Training is responsible for ensuring that an adequate number of Poll Workers, including bilingual workers, are hired and trained to work at the Early Voting locations (Vote Centers). In addition to hiring 6-12 Poll Workers for each Early Voting location, we are hiring 5 back-up workers should an Early Voting location have insufficient or absent Poll Workers.

If a Poll Worker does not report for work, the Inspector is trained to call the Early Voting Hotline to request the Department hire and/or dispatch a replacement/backup worker. If the Inspector does not report, a Judge will assume temporary Inspector responsibilities of the early Vote Center and call the Hotline for further instructions, including the request for a replacement Inspector and/or additional workers.

If a Poll Worker becomes ill during the Early Voting period or has a personal emergency, the worker will be allowed to leave and will be replaced. If a health emergency occurs with a Poll Worker or any other individual in the Early Voting location, the Inspector is trained to call 911 and then the Early Voting Hotline.