



Disaster Quick Tips

Election officials must continue operations, even during a crisis. Below are some ways election officials can support their jurisdictions in preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from natural and man-made disasters.

Tips Sheet

People and Safety First

When a disaster strikes, an entire community may be disrupted – this includes election workers. Your first question should be “Is everyone ok?” Prioritize the safety of yourself and your team.



- Support staff through their own personal needs and losses, both to ensure that they are taken care of and to help them show up in their fullest capacity at work.
- Consider the difficulties voters might be facing and what (if any) flexibility is built into policy or law to allow you to help voters cast their ballots.
- Work with your state’s chief election official and other entities to find creative solutions to provide options to voters, for example, allowing election officials to move voting locations.
- Anticipate how you can accommodate voters with disabilities. For example, if the usual voting locations are no longer available, think about how you will make sure the emergency voting locations are accessible to all voters.

Communication and Relationship Building

Knowing the right people to turn to during a disaster can make a difference in how fast you can respond and ensure that services continue.



- Establish proactive communication with other government agencies in your community well in advance of a disaster – open lines of communication allow you to move quickly if disaster strikes.
- Offer help from election staff to other government agencies within your county or municipality when you can. These agencies will then be familiar with your office and may be more likely to assist you in return when you need support.
- Involve election staff in your county or municipality’s incident command structure (where decisions about emergency response and resource allocations are made). Being at the table means elections can be considered when emergency response decisions are made. Building relationships with emergency management and other key decision-makers in advance can help ensure the continuity of your operations in disasters.

- Educate external partners about the complexities and inflexibility of election laws, such as the date of the election. Make sure you are prepared to provide a clear understanding of what work must be done and when, even in an emergency.
- Have an internal communications process, so the office does not send confusing or conflicting messages. It is ok to say “We are looking into the situation, and we will have more information at [a specific time]” if complete information is not yet available.
- Build relationships with media and other message amplifiers ahead of time to help you share information if a disaster strikes. Have a list of these contacts.

Focus on Flexibility

Disasters are unpredictable. While planning ahead is important, ensure that any plans include enough flexibility to respond to what is happening on the ground.



- Use templates and fill-in-the-blank resources, such as the EAC’s Continuity of Operations Plan Template, to help work through a problem, while still being able to customize.
- Consider using flyers or other printed materials to communicate if electronic communication is difficult or if many of your voters are without power. Have a plan to print those materials in an emergency or consider whether they can be premade templates with some details filled in by hand. Think about which community partners can help you distribute these paper resources and ensure voters see them.

Build in Redundancy

When a disaster strikes, it may take out systems you rely on. Have backups, located in different places and accessed in different ways, so that if one is unusable, others are still available.



- Consider having some communication devices on one cellular network and others on a different network, in case one network fails. Consider asking whether elections staff can use emergency management radios or other communication methods.
- Have at least some systems in analog or printed format, such as ballots, voter lists, election worker rosters, voting location contacts, etc. Have copies of your Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and staff contact lists in multiple locations, both in paper and digital form.
- Cross-train staff, so if one person is unavailable during a disaster, another can step in without having to learn what to do in the moment.

Continuous Improvement

Before a disaster strikes, take the time to routinely review and update the documents and plans you will need in an emergency.



- Review your COOP at least annually and make sure contact information and staffing plans are up-to-date, and reflect any necessary legal or policy changes.
- Regularly test your COOP through tabletop exercises or other scenario-based training.

- Consider including potential disaster response needs as part of your budgetary requests, using examples from other communities to justify expenses that will better prepare your office for any future emergencies.

Additional EAC Resources

- [EAC Disaster Recovery & Response Page](#)
- [EAC Quick Start Guide on Contingency Planning](#)
- [EAC Election Scenarios for Tabletop Planning](#)
- [EAC Continuity of Operations Plan Template & Video Guide](#)
- [EAC/CISA Incident Response Communications Guide](#)

Many thanks to the election officials who took part in the EAC Disaster Roundtable, held in September 2025 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and contributed to these quick tips.

