



U.S. Election Assistance Commission – National Clearinghouse (2025)

Never in the Dark Again: Creating a Real-Time Polling Place Emergency Tracker



Overview

Late one election day, we received a call from a poll worker asking if we had extra batteries. Their polling place had been without power for hours, and they were using phone flashlights to help voters. That call revealed something we did not know: two polling places had been operating without electricity for much of the day.

Earlier that morning, four nearby polling places had lost power. We were told service had been restored and, without a centralized way to track locations, assumed all four sites were back to normal. In reality, only two had regained power. The other two continued operating in darkness for the final hours of voting.

The failure was not preparation, but visibility. Critical contingency information and status updates were scattered across binders, spreadsheets, and individual staff knowledge. We had no single place to see what was happening across polling places. We built the Election Day Information Tracker to solve this.

Using Airtable, we created a centralized database linking polling places to poll workers, emergency contacts, relocation sites, and active issues. Staff can log incidents and track updates in real time, ensuring polling places remain visible and supported throughout election day.

Creativity and Innovation

The key innovation was recognizing that contingency planning must function as a live operational system, not just a collection of written procedures.

We built the tracker as a relational database consisting of connected tables for polling places, poll workers, technicians, emergency relocation sites, facility contacts, and incident reports. Each polling place serves as a central hub. Staff can click on a polling place and immediately see who is assigned there, how to contact them, what contingency plans exist, and whether any issues are active.

Issues can be logged in real time, assigned to specific responders, and updated continuously. This creates a clear, shared operational picture for all staff.

We also gave live access to our police department, public school staff, and Emergency Operations Center staff. These partners could monitor issues as they occurred and assist immediately. This turned contingency planning into a coordinated, real-time response capability shared across agencies.



Cost Effectiveness

This system was built internally using affordable, commercially available software, avoiding the need for expensive proprietary emergency management platforms.

Previously, contingency information was maintained in printed binders and separate spreadsheets. These resources became outdated quickly and required staff to manually search for information during emergencies.

The tracker replaced these fragmented systems with one centralized database accessible to more than 50 command center staff and public safety partners. It eliminated printed emergency binders and reduced the administrative burden of maintaining multiple disconnected records.

The system was developed in just a few weeks by existing staff, requiring minimal financial investment. Despite its low cost, it now supports contingency planning and emergency response for 265 polling places and 2,500 poll workers.

This demonstrates that election offices can significantly improve preparedness and response without significant new spending.

Can be Replicated by Other Offices

This program can be replicated by any election office using widely available tools. Airtable functions like connected spreadsheets, allowing offices to link polling places, staff, emergency contacts, relocation sites, and issues into one unified system.

Offices can start by importing existing spreadsheets, such as polling place lists, staff assignments, and emergency contacts, and linking them together. Selecting a polling place can then display all related information instantly.

Airtable now includes powerful AI functionality called Omni, which allows users to upload spreadsheets and describe in plain language how the information is connected. Omni can automatically build a relational database structure, making implementation faster and easier than ever. Airtable and other platforms also offer free templates that can serve as starting points.

Because this system was built using configurable tools rather than proprietary software, it can be adapted to jurisdictions of any size.

We are happy to share our database structure with other election offices. Anyone may contact us at elect@fairfaxcounty.gov for assistance.



**Meets
Category
Requirements**

This program directly strengthens contingency planning by ensuring election officials can identify and respond to emergencies quickly and effectively.

The tracker consolidates emergency relocation sites, technician assignments, facility contacts, and incident reporting into one accessible system. Staff and public safety partners can monitor polling place conditions in real time and coordinate response immediately.

This capability proved critical during a June 2025 election, when a polling place lost running water due to a water main break. Emergency management and police personnel monitoring the tracker were able to quickly coordinate deployment of Blue Water One, a mobile unit providing water and restroom access. This allowed voting to continue safely despite the loss of facility services.

By connecting contingency plans with real-time operational information, the tracker ensures election officials can respond effectively to unexpected disruptions.

**Improves
Outcomes for
Voters and
Election
Officials**

This program ensures polling place emergencies are identified and resolved quickly, helping polling places remain operational and accessible.

Poll workers benefit from faster, more coordinated support. When issues arise, staff can log them immediately, assign responders, and monitor progress in real time. Required updates ensure no issue is overlooked.

Election officials gain full visibility into conditions across all polling places, allowing faster decision-making and more effective resource deployment. Emergency management and law enforcement partners can also monitor and assist directly.

By replacing paper-based contingency systems with a centralized, real-time database, this program improves coordination, strengthens emergency response, and ensures voters can continue to cast their ballots even when unexpected disruptions occur.



Election day issue tracker

2025-11 ARCHIVE EA
Election Day ▾

Election Day

- Issues Dashboard
- + Log a new issue**
- Unresolved Issues
- Resolved Issues
- Rovers
- Precincts & Rovers
- Precincts & Chiefs
- 5:00 AM Contacts
- All EOs
- Polling Places
- Depot, Pickup, & Setup T...
- Emergency Relocation Sit...
- Visitors
- High School Pages
- Chiefs Notebook
- Issues FAQ
- 1 9am Turnout
- 2 12pm Turnout
- 3 3pm Turnout

Election Night

- Depots
- Envelope and Supply Inve...
- Canvass

Share

+ Log a new issue

EO (leave blank if caller is not an EO)

Input source *

Call-taker *

Election (pre-filled)

Description *

Severity *
High: Emergency, voting is stopped, power outage, etc.
Medium: Requires timely follow up
Low: Informational or immediately resolved
 High
 Medium
 Low

Issue type *

Attachments

Issue Status *
 Open ticket
 Assigned to staff
 Awaiting update
 Resolved

Follow-up by
Who will lead the response? Leave blank if not sure.

Office staff involved
Which staff are assigned to this issue?



Polling place information

2025-11 ARCHIVE EA Election Day									
Election Day > Polling Places									
Building ↑	PCTs	Precincts	Org Type	Address	City	Zip...	Building Entrance	Voting Room	Cage Storage
Alan Leis Center at Walnut Hill	1	525 WALNUT HILL	School	7423 Camp Alger Ave.	Falls Church	220...	Entrance 1	Multi-Purpose Room 106	Room 100
Aldrin Elementary School	2	233 NORTH POINT, 234 ALDR...	School	11375 Center Harbor Rd.	Reston	201...	#5 Gym #1 Cafe	Gym Cafeteria	Boiler Room
Annandale Fire Station, Co. #8	1	518 COLUMBIA	Public	7128 Columbia Pike	Annandale	220...	Bingo lobby	Bingo Hall	Bingo Hall
Annandale Terrace Elementary School	1	504 BRISTOW	School	7604 Herald St.	Annandale	220...	Main entrance	Cafeteria	Parent Center next to cafeteria
Armstrong Elementary School	2	201 ARMSTRONG, 236 STUART	School	11900 Lake Newport Rd.	Reston	201...	Door 4	Gym and cafeteria	Boiler room
Bailey's Elementary School	1	530 TRIPPS	School	6111 Knollwood Drive	Falls Church	220...	Door 7	Gym and Cafeteria	Gym
Beech Tree Elementary School	1	512 SLEEPY HOLLOW	School	3401 Beechtree Lane	Falls Church	220...	Enter door 2 and exit door 1	Cafeteria	Cafeteria Storage Closet
Belle View Elementary School	1	602 BELLEVUE	School	6701 Fort Hunt Rd.	Alexandria	223...	Door #4	Cafeteria	Cafeteria closet
Belvedere Elementary School	1	503 BELVEDERE	School	6540 Columbia Pike	Falls Church	220...	Door/Entrance 1 - Main E...	Cafeteria	Cafeteria
Bethlehem Lutheran Church	1	528 RIDGELEA	Private	8922 Little River Turnpike	Fairfax	220...	Main entrance For ADA ac...	Fellowship Hall	Fellowship Hall
Bonnie Brae Elementary School	1	126 BONNIE BRAE	School	5420 Sideburn Road	Fairfax	220...	Door #2	Cafeteria	Under staircase by elevator
Braddock Elementary School	1	106 HERITAGE	School	7825 Heritage Dr.	Annandale	220...	Door #4	Gymnasium	Hallway near cafeteria
Bren Mar Park Elementary School	1	526 BREN MAR	School	6344 Beryl Rd.	Alexandria	223...	Door 1	Cafeteria	Locked closet across from fron...
Brookfield Elementary School	1	902 BROOKFIELD	School	4200 Lees Corner Rd.	Chantilly	201...	Main entrance, Door 1	Cafeteria	Cafeteria Kitchen
Bryant Center	1	604 BUCKNELL	School	2709 Popkins Lane	Alexandria	223...	Door 1	Gym	Equipment will be stored in a L...
Bull Run Elementary School	2	923 BULL RUN, 935 ROBINSO...	School	15301 Route 29	Centreville	201...	Main Entrance - Door 1	Cafeteria	Cafeteria Closet
Burke Centre Library	1	815 WOODYARD	Public	5935 Freds Oak Rd	Burke	220...	Main entrance during ope...	Meeting room 116 and 117	Meeting Room 116 and 117
Burke Community Church	1	842 PARKWAY	Private	9900 Old Keene Mill Road	Burke	220...	Cafe/Auditorium entrance...	Auditorium	Locked closet in Auditorium
Bush Hill Elementary School	1	401 BUSH HILL	School	5927 Westchester St.	Alexandria	223...	Door 1	Cafeteria	Locked closet
Camelot Elementary School	1	522 CAMELOT	School	8100 Guinevere Dr.	Annandale	220...	Door 3	Gym - room #55	Gym
Cameron Elementary School	1	402 CAMERON	School	3434 Campbell Dr.	Alexandria	223...	Door 8	Gym	Locked gym closet
Canterbury Woods Elementary School	1	113 CANTERBURY	School	4910 Willet Dr.	Annandale	220...	Door 9 (direct entrance int...	Gymnasium	Gymnasium storage closet
Capital Church	1	240 COLVIN	Private	10233 Leesburg Pike	Vienna	221...	Office Entrance Doors #2	Atrium	Sprinkler Hallway
Cardinal Forest Elementary School	1	128 CARDINAL	School	8600 Forrester Blvd.	Springfield	221...	Door 1, which is ADA com...	Gym	Outside gym by door 6



Election day dashboard

2025-11 ARCHIVE EA
Election Day

Election Day

Issues Dashboard

- Log a new issue
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- Emergency Relocation Sit...
- Visitors
- High School Pages
- Chiefs Notebook
- Issues FAQ
- 9am Turnout
- 12pm Turnout
- 3pm Turnout

Election Night

- Depots
- Envelope and Supply Inve...
- Canvass

Share

Unresolved Issues
1

Resolved Issues
446

Total Issues
447

Call Time	Tick...	Precinct	Issue Type	Description	Latest update...	Latest update	Input source
11/4/20... 10:12...	1	613 WESTGATE	Closing procedures	Packed up and everyone left. Left machine keys	-	-	Call from EO



Turnout surveys

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Election Day

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- Emergency Relocation Sit...
- Visitors
- High School Pages
- Chiefs Notebook
- Issues FAQ
- 3am Turnout
- 12pm Turnout
- 3pm Turnout**

Election Night

Depots

Envelope and Supply Inve...

Canvass

Share 🗨️ ⏪

3 PM Turnout Data

This data updates live as more precincts submit their turnout surveys.

Election Day Turnout
Registered voters

20.09%

Average Ballots Used

35.10%

Precincts Reporting

254

Voter Turnout - Magisterial District

MD	Turnout %
1 - Braddock	~18%
2 - Hunter Mill	~18%
3 - Dranesville	~18%
4 - Franconia	~18%
5 - Mason	~18%
6 - Mount Vernon	~18%
7 - Providence	~18%
8 - Springfield	~18%
9 - Sully	~18%

Voter Turnout - Congressional District

CD	Turnout %
8	~20%
10	~20%
11	~20%

Voter Turnout - Virginia House of Delegates District

HDD	Turnout %
4	~18%
6	~18%
7	~18%
8	~18%
9	~18%
10	~18%
11	~18%
12	~18%
13	~18%
14	~18%
15	~18%
16	~18%
17	~18%
18	~18%
19	~18%

All precincts

Precinct	CD	Registered Voters	Voters checked in	Registered Voter Turnout	Total Ballots issued	Total Ballots Remaining	Ballots Used
104 CHAPEL [3 PM]	11	2,605	738	28.33%	1,800	1,062	41.00%
105 FAIRVIEW [3 PM]	11	5,135	951	18.52%	2,800	1,849	33.96%



Precinct closing status

