

# FIVE STEPS TO SAFER ELECTIONS

## IN FOCUS: STEP 4

*Plan: Planning the Response to Security Incidents*

### INTRODUCTION

Increased cooperation, routine security measures, and public communications about law enforcement engagement are significant deterrents to disruptive or threatening activity. Still, such activity may occur. Here we provide an agenda for a meeting that would plan out the response to incidents, organized around the following topics:

1. Context of Disruption
2. Disruption and Emergency Response
3. Responding to Threats and Intimidation
4. Protective Services
5. Crisis Communications
6. Preventive Activity
7. Investigation

### 1 MEET

Meet with counterparts and other stakeholders

### 2 SHARE

Share experiences, contact information, election details, and expectations

### 3 AGREE

Agree to work together regularly and define rules of engagement where voters are present

### 4 PLAN

Plan incident response, information sharing, and crisis communications

### 5 PRACTICE

Practice information sharing and response plans

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### Discuss the Context of the Disruption

*A primary distinction is between election sites where voters are present and where they are not. Discuss how responses should differ in these settings.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Ending or de-escalating so voting/work can continue
- Moving the dispute out of the public space
- Election workers as arbiters of election procedure
- Existing election "continuity of operations" plans

### Plan Out Emergency Response to Disruption

*Disruption and disputes that may escalate to disruption may prompt a law enforcement response. Discuss how that response should proceed.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Authority of election office/election workers on site
  - Who should responding officers look to?
  - Authority of the election office over on-site election personnel
  - Poll worker security training - who to call? when to call?
- Different types of disruption
  - Escalating arguments with observers; or between partisan poll workers
  - Intimidation of workers or voters
  - Intentional disruption
  - Violent non-election incident nearby
- Where disruption takes place?
  - Voting sites, central office/work sites or ballot drop boxes
- Sources of complaint - election personnel vs. observer/voter
  - Some groups are suggesting observers call 911 with election complaints.

### Plan a Response to Threats and Intimidation

*Threatening activity – ugly calls and emails – affects election personnel and can disrupt the election. Discuss how to respond to threatening activity.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Reporting
  - How election staff can create useful records of threats
    - Create an incident report form?
  - Direct or violent language as a threshold
  - Is recording a call an option? (One-party consent laws; or a pre-taped message – “This call may be recorded for ... reasons.”)
- Responses
  - Improved protective services
  - Law enforcement contact
    - Investigative
    - Deterrent value

### Plan for Protective Interventions

*To do their jobs, election personnel need to know their safety is being looked after. Discuss what actions can be taken to support election personnel at times of disruption.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Law enforcement security for election personnel
  - Parking escorts
  - Presence at or patrol of residences
- Law enforcement security recommendations for threatened personnel
- Temporary security provided by the election office
  - Home camera installation for those threatened
  - Temporary housing/hotel stay
  - Staff 'buddy system' and/or after-hours policies
  - Other recommendations?

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### Discuss Crisis Communications

*Discuss how law enforcement and the election office will work together to let voters and election personnel know election spaces are being secured in the wake of an incident.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Joint appearances/joint releases of information?
- Who (what group?) will be involved in planning and drafting?
- Tempering message to the threat environment
- Overly stern message could create anxiety instead of reassurance

### Discuss Post-Incident Preventive Measures

*If threats or disruptions occur, this creates a heightened security environment. Discuss the posture of the election office and law enforcement should change to provide more protection to election sites and procedures.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- What changes to election office physical security protocols should be made?
  - Entry controls
  - Staff Briefing
    - See Something/Say Something and other security messages
    - Reassurance, including mention of temporary security measures from the section above.
    - Active shooter or other training.
- What changes to law enforcement posture should take place?
  - Threat thresholds that prompt more visible deployment.
  - Patrol frequency
  - Other responses
- What threat thresholds might prompt more significant changes to election procedures?
  - Changes to or reduction of sites to allow for tighter security for personnel
  - Seeking restraining orders against disruptive observers or others engaged in disorderly behavior, replacement of disruptive election workers

## IN FOCUS: STEP 4

### Plan Out Investigation Trajectory

*Discuss how law enforcement and the election office will work together to let voters and election personnel know election spaces are being secured in the wake of an incident.*

#### Discussion Prompts

- Role of prosecutors in establishing, guiding investigations
- Investigating threatening or disruptive activity
  - Designating a lead investigator
  - Frequency/nature of communications between agencies
- Law enforcement communicating information about election worker behavior that election staff is unaware of
- Cooperating on investigations of illegal election activity by observers, workers or voters
  - Election staff insight into election information and procedures
- The possibility of credible allegations against the election office or its staff

## NEXT STEPS

Once you've developed a consensus plan for routine security, incident response and communications, we recommend practicing your plan. One way to do that is by using the tabletop exercise module we provide in "Step 5 – Putting Security Plans into Practice."