



Liberty County Elections Emergency Operations Plan

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this Emergency Operations Plan is to provide the following:

- **A safe and secure working environment for all election workers.**
- **Emergency procedures for all election workers**
- **A means of communication between elections workers and the County Clerk's office.**
- **A means of communication between elections workers and emergency personnel.**

For more information please contact:

Lee Haidusek Chambers

County Clerk

936-336-4670

APRIL 17, 2024

Part 1 Life Safety

COMMUNICATION

1. The Presiding Judge is in-charge of the election workers, equipment and voters located at the polling location per the Texas Election Code Sec. 32.071. In the event of an emergency situation, he/she will notify 9-1-1 if necessary, and the County Clerk. The Judge may designate an election worker to communicate with other emergency personnel and the County Clerk's Office with reliable and accurate information.
2. The Liberty County Clerk will assume the role of chief communicator to the news media for election issues. The County Clerk's office shall maintain an up-to-date list of news media to be contacted with regard to the election process or in a crisis situation. The Liberty County PIO has the sole responsibility to provide all media and public information for any information outside of the election process.
3. Liberty County Clerk staff and election workers at the polls: If contacted by telephone or at the scene of a crisis by the media, direct them to the County Clerk's office. Do not release the name(s) of victim(s) or details of the event until proper authorization from the Liberty County Clerk's office has been issued.

If pressed for information, simply state that policy requires you to direct all media requests to the County Clerk's office.

In the event of an emergency, the following actions should be taken:

4. ALWAYS RESPOND TO THE EMERGENCY. If first aid or emergency personnel are warranted, the election judge should take the necessary steps to handle the situation. Ask another election worker to dial 911 and/or notify the Elections office. The injured person should never be left unattended by elections workers.
5. NOTIFY THE FAMILY. If a family member cannot be reached, a message should be left if an answering machine is available. The Elections staff should continue to try to reach next of kin at 5-minute intervals until someone is reached.
6. NOTIFY ELECTIONS OFFICE. The next call should be to the Liberty County Clerk's office. Questions about the presence of emergency vehicles on site may come into the elections office and the staff needs to be updated periodically on what is happening. The Liberty County PIO will update media.

LOCK DOWN

In the event of a violent or threatening situation, initiate and implement lock down procedures.

In the polling location:

1. Voters should stay inside the polling location.
2. Lock doors and cover windows.
3. Move all election workers and voters to an interior wall away from windows and doors.
4. Take a count of persons inside the polling place. Report this number to the County Clerk's office of where and how many people are sheltering-in- place by phone call or text message if possible.
5. Stay put until notified that lock down is terminated.

NOTE - All Election staff must wear identification badges at all times per the Texas Election Code Sec. 61.010(b)

WEAPONS

Sec. 46.03. PLACES WEAPONS PROHIBITED. (a) A person commits an offense if the person intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly possesses or goes with a firearm, knife, club, or prohibited weapon (2) on the premises of a polling place on the day of an election or while early voting is in progress;

1. Call 9-1-1 and report the presence of the weapon. Give a good description of the armed person: gender, approximate age, physical characteristics, clothing type and color, type of weapon, and where the armed person was last seen with direction of travel if available.
2. Notify the County Clerk's office that there is suspicion of a ***gun in possession*** on site.
3. The judge will determine if lock down procedures or evacuating procedures are to be implemented.
4. If law enforcement determines evacuation is necessary, immediately evacuate the area of the building that is a concern.

5. Advise all election workers and voters to make no attempt to disarm the individual.
6. Turn situation over to law enforcement and offer assistance as needed.

SHOOTING

1. Follow the above guidelines, administering basic first aid until health care professionals arrive.
2. The Liberty County Clerk, working with law enforcement, will make all decisions and arrangements to file necessary charges against person(s) involved.

BOMB THREAT

Bomb threats may be originated in writing, in person, over the phone, email, or through a second source.

1. The Presiding Judge or designee will call police (911).
2. Notify the Liberty County Clerk's office (936-336-4670).
3. The Presiding Judge or designee should initiate a **visual** search by all election workers for any foreign objects. Do not open any drawers, doors or cabinets. If something suspicious is found, **DO NOT TOUCH IT.**
4. All election workers should remain in polling locations.
5. Do not use cell phones or radios at any time as they may trigger a device.
6. The police will determine if the building should be evacuated.
7. It may be necessary to evacuate election workers and voters at least 300 feet away from the building.
8. ***"The building is clear"*** message from law enforcement will inform election workers and voters when the building is safe and voting may resume.
9. A written report shall be submitted to the Liberty County Clerk by the Presiding Judge.

GAS LEAK

Natural gas can occur inside or outside of a building. The potential hazards of a gas leak are fire, explosion, carbon monoxide poisoning, and suffocation. You should suspect a gas leak if you smell a very unpleasant odor, like that of rotten eggs. “Mercaptan” is added to gas to let you know that a leak exists.

For All Gas Leaks

1. If the smell of gas is strong, *evacuate* the building using emergency evacuation procedures.
2. Call 9-1-1 from outside the building. A cell phone may generate a spark that could trigger a fire or explosion. State the emergency situation.
3. Contact the Liberty County Clerk’s office.

EVACUATION

First Actions in case of fire or other emergency

1. The fire alarm will ring. Evacuate the polling location of all election workers and voters.
2. Call 9-1-1.
3. Do not take personal belongings or election voting equipment.
4. If possible, take controller for the Electronic voting machines.
5. Once out of the building, proceed to designated area, make note that all elections workers and voters have left the building.
6. The Presiding Judge or designee will be in charge of the election workers and voters.
7. Call the County Clerk’s office.

In the event that a polling location needs to be evacuated (flooding, chemical spill, explosion, etc.), the Presiding Judge will notify the election workers and voters to evacuate the area and to leave the location and proceed to the County Clerk’s office at either an Annex or the Courthouse.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Direct Contact

1. Evacuate the area to avoid fumes.
2. Call 9-1-1
3. Remove contaminated clothing and flush the area with cold water for fifteen (15) minutes. If flushing the eye area, position the flow into the eye while holding the eyes open.
4. Notify the County Clerk's office.

Indirect Contact

1. Call 9-1-1
2. Call the Liberty County Clerk's office. 936-336-4670
3. The Liberty County Clerk's office will contact the Presiding Judge if evacuation from the polling location is necessary, and will direct the Judge on where to relocate.

Identify the Spill to Emergency Personnel with the Following Information

Product number, Manufacturer information, Product contents/ingredients as given on container (whenever possible, spell the names to avoid misunderstanding), Volume of spill/exposure, Reactions on surface/individuals, Product contamination with other chemicals.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (GUIDELINE FOR CLEAN UP)

All body fluids should be treated as if they contain potential infectious agents.

- **USE OF GLOVES:** Vinyl, latex, or rubber gloves shall be worn by any caretaker when cleaning up blood spills, vomit, urine, feces, or other secretions. Gloves shall also be worn when removing any body fluid spills from the environment (e.g. furniture, floors, rugs, etc.).
- **HAND WASHING:** Hand washing after contact with an individual is routinely recommended. In the case of accidental contact with blood, hands, and/or affected skin areas should be washed immediately. Proper hand

washing requires the use of soap and warm water and vigorous washing under a stream of running water for approximately ten (10) seconds. A waterless hand rinse should be used when running water is not available. OSHA 29CFR1910, 1030

NOTE: Any potential infectious exposure (direct contact with body fluids, blood, vomitus, etc) should be immediately reported to the Chamber County Public Health Department for guidance on disinfection, cleanup of contaminated equipment, disposal of waste materials and proper decontamination of persons, as well as any post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) OSHA 29CFR1910, 1030

- **CLEANING METHODS:** Soiled environmental surfaces should be promptly cleaned with a freshly prepared household chlorine bleach solution (1:10 dilution). Apply a disinfectant absorbent agent to soiled rugs, allow to dry, sweep up with a dustpan and broom, and follow with a disinfectant rug shampoo applied with a brush. Using fresh bleach solution, soak mops, brooms, and brushes for ten (10) minutes. Other cleaning equipment should be thoroughly rinsed in fresh bleach solution. Washable clothing should be presoaked and washed separately using one-half cup chlorine bleach per wash cycle
- **DISPOSAL OF MATERIALS:** Clothing and other non-disposable materials that are soaked with body fluids should be placed in plastic bags and instructions for handling given to appropriate persons. Disposable towels, tissues, gloves, and cleaning supplies should be used whenever possible, and should be placed in a plastic bag, securely tied and to be disposed of. Used cleaning solutions should be flushed down a toilet.

INJURY

1. Call emergency personal at 911 if needed.
2. The Presiding Judge will notify the County Clerk's office.

WEATHER CLOSING

Most weather closings of the County will occur overnight, however, a few may occur during the day.

- County Clerk's office staff, election workers and voters, may be reminded to listen to local radio stations and television stations for weather-closing announcements.

- Liberty County Clerk's office staff will be informed of any weather closings by the County Clerk.
- County Clerk will notify all Election Judges of any closings of polling locations and Judges will then notify Alt. Judge and clerks during any election.
- The County Clerk is solely authorized to close polling locations, delay openings, or accelerate the end of the voting.
- At this time, Liberty County and the Liberty County Clerk's Office does not possess a program to notify citizens of emergency situations through an online text service.

WEATHER EMERGENCY

In the event of a major weather-related situation and it has been determined that any of the polling locations cannot be opened or staffed, the following procedures will be followed.

During a Weather Emergency

- If a weather emergency is given, the County Clerk's office will notify the polling location and whether the polling location must be closed.
- If the location is to be closed, the Presiding judge will announce, "At this time, we are implementing inclement weather procedures."
- Allow any election workers or voters to leave the polling location.
- Lock and seal all electronic voting machines, document the seal numbers and take all written election materials. Do **not** take electronic voting machines. Turn out the lights, close and lock the door upon leaving your polling location. If it is possible to return to the polling location, wait for instructions from the County Clerk's office.

FLOODING

- The Presiding Judge should be attuned to available media for possible flash flood warnings and flooding progress.
- Be prepared to move from danger quickly if required.

- Watch for flooding in highway dips, low areas and around bridges near your polling location.
- Watch for signs such as thunder, lightning, or distant heavy rainfall.
- **Contact the County Clerk's office for further instructions including evacuation orders. If you must leave and can safely complete the following:** Lock and seal all electronic voting machines, document the seal numbers and take all written election materials. Do **not** take electronic voting machines. Turn out the lights, close and lock the door upon leaving your polling location.
- If it is possible to return to the polling location, wait for instructions from the County Clerk's office.

POWER FAILURE

Power Failure

1. Call the Liberty County Clerk's office and notify of the power failure.
2. Inform the Liberty County Clerk's office of the situation. In the event the telephones will not operate, send someone to County Clerk's office for assistance.
3. If there is a danger of fire, evacuate the building by evacuation procedures.

TORNADO

Tornado Watch

A tornado watch is declared by the National Weather Service. Tornado Watch means be prepared. Tornadoes are possible in and the watch area. (NOAA) Generally speaking, signs which precede a tornado include one or more of the following: severe lightning, destructive high winds, heavy rains, large, heavy hail.

Report immediately any of the following to Liberty County 9-1-1

1. Funnel shaped, rotating clouds.
2. Protuberance(s) or rotary motion at the base of a thunder cloud system.
3. Any rotating cloud of debris or dust near the ground.
4. If it is too dark to see, listen for any distinctive roar similar to an aircraft or train.

Tornado warning

A tornado warning is declared by the National Weather Service. This condition occurs when a tornado has been reported in the area and there is imminent danger to life and property.

- If a tornado is spotted or reported in your area, sound the alarm immediately.
- Move everyone immediately to a safe place.
Do not leave a building except to go to a pre-designated, safer building unless instructed to do so by civil authorities in charge. Keep abreast of who these civil authorities might be (police, fire department, etc).
If a tornado is spotted or reported as being imminent, assume disaster drill position (sitting, knees up, head down and hands locked, covering the head).
If outside and unable to reach shelter, escort voters to a ditch or hollow and have them lie face down with hands over head.

Post-Tornado

- If a tornado passes without striking you, be cautious, as there may be other funnels in the area. Usually, however, more than one tornado does not occur in the same general path following the initial tornado.
- If your building is struck by a tornado:
 - Call 911.
 - Administer first aid to personnel if needed
 - Evacuate damaged area cautiously to designated staging area(s).
The injured should be moved as little as possible. All injuries should be noted, and all missing should be noted.
- Notification of all damaged equipment and buildings, and those who have been injured should be made to the County Clerk's office.

Part 2 Election Emergency Plan

If any significant emergency event occurs in which an Election Day polling location is unavailable and the voting equipment and supplies are damaged, then an Emergency Plan will be instituted.

The Liberty County Judge and the Liberty County Clerk will determine the severity of the situation. The Secretary of State will be advised of all emergency situations. Only the Governor or County Judge can postpone an election in a disaster or emergency.

The Liberty County Clerk will request the County Judge to activate a limited Emergency Operations Center to support the County Clerk with securing the resources and coordination required to reschedule and or relocate an election. All communications to the media and public will be issued from this office or from the Liberty County Public Information Officer. The following procedures will be followed:

1. All Emergency personnel will be contacted, including the Sheriff, Emergency Management, etc.
2. The regular Early Voting locations that have been designated by the Commissioner's Court will become the Emergency Election Day polling locations.
3. All election workers will be notified to determine if they can safely travel to the Emergency Polling locations.
4. Emergency voting supplies will be distributed to the Emergency polling location

Emergency Supplies

The following supplies will be distributed to each Emergency polling location.

1. All unused Early Voting Ballots designated as "Emergency Ballots" will be in secure transport containers
2. Pre-locked, numbered sealed and secure ballot box
3. Voting Booths

4. Paper copy of voter registration list, if possible
5. Signs stating “**EMERGENCY VOTING HERE**”
6. Table and chairs if needed
7. All other election supplies needed to conduct an election

OPENING THE EMERGENCY POLLING LOCATION

Once the emergency polling location has been established including any lighting or electricity needs, the County Clerk or designee will proceed with the opening of the emergency polling location and notifying the public in coordination with the OEM.

The Presiding Judge and election workers will prepare the polling place for opening as follows:

1. Set up tables and voting booths.
2. Post “**EMERGENCY VOTING HERE**” signs in places visible to the voting public.
3. Prepare **Emergency Ballots** for use
4. Prepare all election materials for use

Use paper copy of voter registration list provided by County Clerk’s office. If that is not available, then voter must present voter registration card. If the voter does not have his/her card available, then Provisional Ballot material will be used.

CLOSING THE EMERGENCY POLLING LOCATION

Since voting will be done on paper Emergency Ballots, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The Presiding Judge will complete all election forms and paperwork.
2. Voted **Emergency Ballots** are sealed in a pre-locked, number sealed and secure ballot box.

3. All signs are removed from areas around polling location and location is secured.

4. All **Emergency Ballots** in the locked ballot box and election materials are returned to the County Clerk's office at the Liberty County Courthouse.

VANDALISM

Procedures for building vandalism

CALL 9-1-1

- The Liberty County Clerk's office should be notified **IMMEDIATELY** as to the kind, extent, location and approximate time the damage was incurred.
- **DO NOT OPEN THE POLLING PLACE TO THE VOTERS**
- Before the police arrival, the building space affected should be sealed off by appropriate means and all items in the affected area must be left intact for possible police investigation procedures.
- Within the limitations of the above, all possible efforts should be expended by building personnel to make emergency repairs to items deemed dangerous to persons or property within the building.
- The Presiding Judge should make a record of the type and extent of damage to the building and its contents, including election equipment and supplies.
- The Presiding Judge and the County Clerk will determine if any cleanup is needed.
- Proper maintenance personnel will be called if building damages need immediate repair.
- The Presiding Judge and the County Clerk will note all pertinent information on a burglary/vandalism report, with a copy forwarded to the Police for proper evaluation.
- If it is determined that the building is not safe for voting to continue, then the Emergency Plan will be instituted.

LOITERING OR ELECTIONEERING

A person commits an offense, if during the voting period and within 100 feet of an outside door through which a voter may enter the building in which a polling place is located, the person:

Loiters; or electioneers for or against any candidate, measure or political party

When person(s) are suspected of loitering or electioneering pursue the following procedures

- The Presiding Judge shall inform the person of the distance markers and prohibited area.
- Ask the person to move to an area outside of the prohibited area.
- If they refuse to leave, remind him/her that they are in violation of the law and that the police **may** be called.
- If they still refuse to leave, contact the Liberty County Clerk's office. The County Clerk will advise in-route activities.
- Remember, the Presiding Judge **cannot** enforce any electioneering if the person is **outside** of the restricted area.

Transportation Issues

If the Presiding Judge or Alternate Judge is transporting election equipment to or from the Liberty County Courthouse and has vehicle issues, such as a flat tire, ran out of gas, in a vehicle accident, contact the Liberty County Clerk's Office. Call 9-1-1 for accidents and then call us! Secure all equipment. Relocate equipment if it poses a danger (off to the shoulder of the road, etc.). Make sure both judges witness all actions involving the equipment.

The Liberty County Clerk's office will determine how the election equipment will be retrieved from the two judges.

A written report shall be made by the presiding judge and signed by both the judge and alternate judge and given to the Liberty County Clerk after the incident is clear.

This Emergency Plan may be edited as needed.

April 17, 2024

Lee Haidusek Chambers

Liberty County Clerk