



SECTION 3

OPENING THE POLLS

Fairfax County Office of Elections
12000 Government Center Pkwy, Suite 323, Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703-324-4735 or ElectionOfficers@fairfaxcounty.gov
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections>

OPENING THE POLLS

By law, the polls must open for voting at exactly 6:00 AM. There is a lot to accomplish in the one hour before opening, particularly if your polling place was unavailable for setup the day before.

Delegate tasks and work in parallel. Split up tasks among your officers and have them get started. Put your best officers on the most important tasks.

Prioritize the tasks necessary to open the polls on time. This includes swearing in officers, setting up 1 Poll Pad, setting up 1 DS200, and opening and counting ballots.

Have readily available the folder where you stored the items you will need immediately.

Assign the following tasks and verify that they have been completed properly. More detailed instructions follow.

- **Task 1: Begin the opening process and swear in officers**
- **Task 2: Open the equipment cart**
- **Task 3: Set up the Poll Pads**
- **Task 4: Open the Admin Tablet**
- **Task 5: Set up the DS200 scanner**
- **Task 6: Set up the ExpressVote**
- **Task 7: Set up the absentee ballot drop box**
- **Task 8: Open and count ballots**
- **Task 9: Set up the check-in table, ballot table, and voter area**
- **Task 10: Set up the Chief's table**
- **Task 11: Post signs**
- **Task 12: Mark 40-foot Prohibited Area**
- **Task 13: Final instructions to election officers before the polls open**

Open polls promptly at 6:00 AM. You must open the polls on time, even if you haven't finished lower-priority tasks like putting up signs, marking the 40-foot Prohibited Activities area, securing voter parking, or organizing the Chief's table.

IMPORTANT: From 5:00 AM to 6:00 AM, we get a very large volume of phone calls. Avoid calling the office during this hour unless you are experiencing an emergency that will prevent you from opening the polls on time. Most issues can be resolved a little later in the day. For example, if one of your Poll Pads or DS200s is not working correctly, that's OK – that's why we give you more than one! Call us after 6:30 AM and we can help you at that time.

OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 1: BEGIN THE OPENING PROCESS

Materials needed: Oath form, pens, election officer name badges, high school page name badges (November only), authorized representative name badges, small Chief/Assistant Chief envelopes containing machine keys.

- Promptly at 5:00 AM, swear in election officers; assign numbers; show all officers unopened keys envelope**
 - Assign each election officer a number. Use the number printed by their name on the precinct roster, if available: Chief is #1, Assistant Chief is #2, Collector Officers are #3 and #4, then all other officers are #5 onwards.
 - Instruct officers to always sign next to their assigned number on all forms.
 - Swear in officers using the Oath form. (Do not wait for late election officers. They can be sworn in individually.)
 - All officers must sign the Oath form. Chief must sign the form in two places.
 - Hand out name badges. Instruct officers to print their first name on their badge and write their assigned number in one corner. All officers and pages must wear their name badges during the day.
 - Hold up the two small chief and assistant chief envelopes containing the machine keys. Show all officers present that the seals on these envelopes are unbroken.

- Welcome authorized representatives.**
 - Authorized representatives must be qualified Virginia voters and have a written authorization letter signed by the local political party chairman or an independent candidate on the ballot. Write-in candidates cannot have authorized representatives.
 - You may check the voter registration status of authorized representatives by looking them up on a Poll Pad or asking them to show you their registration status using the state website on their phone.
 - Hand out authorized representative identification badges, which they must wear. They must turn in the badges upon leaving.
 - See *Authorized Representatives* section for details on how many representatives may be present at opening, during the day, and during closing.

- Get organized – assign jobs to election officers.**
 - Assign or remind election officers of their tasks from the first page of this section.
 - **Hand out the Opening Guides to appropriate teams.**
 - Remind officers: no food/drinks near ballots or any voting equipment!

- Check Chief's and Assistant Chief's cell phones for good connections.**
 - The Office of Elections may call you during the day. If you have not already done so, add our main number, **703-324-4735**, to your contacts!
 - Curbside voters may also use this phone number.
 - Election officers may also need to call you during the day. Ask your officers to add both the Chief and Assistant Chief phone numbers to their contacts.

OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 2: OPEN AND UNLOAD THE EQUIPMENT CART

Materials needed: Equipment Cart opening guide, equipment cart key on lanyard, pen, Machine Certification Form, Cart Security Log.

- Instruct a team of **three officers** to use the Equipment Cart opening guide to open the equipment cart, remove the Poll Pads, unload supplies, and DS200 scanners.
- Only remove and open additional boxes of ballots as they are needed.
- The cart must remain locked during the day.

NOTE: Whenever the cart is unsealed / opened or resealed / closed, you are **required to complete and sign the Cart Security Log located in the pocket on the inside of the right cart door. Two officers must do this together.**

TASK 3: SET UP THE POLL PADS AND CHECK-IN TABLE

Materials needed: Poll Pad & Check-In Table opening guide, green Poll Pad cases, and Machine Certification Form. For each station: Voter Identification Chart, Identifying Driver Privilege Cards guide, During the Day Check-In Table function description, voter permit cards, Voter Referral Worksheets, and pen.

- Instruct one team of officers to open Poll Pads and set up the check-in table.
- Give the team of officers the Poll Pad & Check-In Table opening guide.

TASK 4: SET UP THE ADMIN TABLET

- Open the blue case. Extend the kickstand behind the screen, and then set it on the table.
- Power on the tablet by firmly pressing and holding down the power button on the left side until the Apple logo appears.
- Enter the passcode on the lock screen. The passcode is on the Chief's password card.
- Keep the Admin Tablet at the Chief's table or with the SDR Specialist.
- A charger and power cable are included in the black kit. Use a surge suppressor.

TASK 5: SET UP THE DS200 DIGITAL SCANNER

Materials needed: DS200 opening guide, wristband keys, password card, Machine Certification Form, pen, 2 privacy booths.

- Instruct one team of officers to open and set up both DS200 scanners.
- Give the team of officers the DS200 Ballot Scanner opening guide.
- Ensure officers remove the sealed box(es) of ballots from the DS200 ballot compartment.
- Open and set up **two** DS200 voting machines.
- Wait until 6:00 AM to press "Go to Voting Mode" on **both** machines.

OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 6: SET UP THE EXPRESSVOTE BALLOT MARKING DEVICE

Materials needed: ExpressVote opening guide, wristband keys, password card, privacy booth.

- Instruct one team of officers to open and set up the ExpressVote ballot marking device.
 - Give the team of officers the ExpressVote opening guide.
 - Open only one ExpressVote machine unless there is a problem with it, or you need to operate both machines due to a high volume of voters.
-

TASK 7: SET UP AND POSITION ABSENTEE BALLOT DROP BOX

Materials needed: drop box assembly guide, drop box, hardware, and lock and key from clear plastic portfolio case stored in black kit.

- Instruct one or two officers to assemble the drop box. (Save the brown box.)
 - Give the team of officers the drop box opening guide.
 - Co-located precincts may share a single drop box.
 - Position the drop box outside the building entrance, just outside the voting room entrance, or just inside the voting room entrance. Use your discretion to determine the best placement for voters at your polling place.
 - The drop box must be available for voters from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM on election day.
-

TASK 8: PREPARE BALLOT TABLE AND COUNT BALLOTS

Materials needed: Ballot Table opening guide, Ballot Table during the day guide, Ballot Receipt form, Ballot Worksheet form, Envelope #4, Demonstration Ballot, one pack of ballots, loose pack of 10 ExpressVote cards, privacy folders, pens, magnifying glass, magnifying sheet, clipboards.

- Instruct one team of officers to prepare the ballot table, including opening and counting the first pack of ballots.
 - Give the team of officers the Ballot Table opening guide.
-

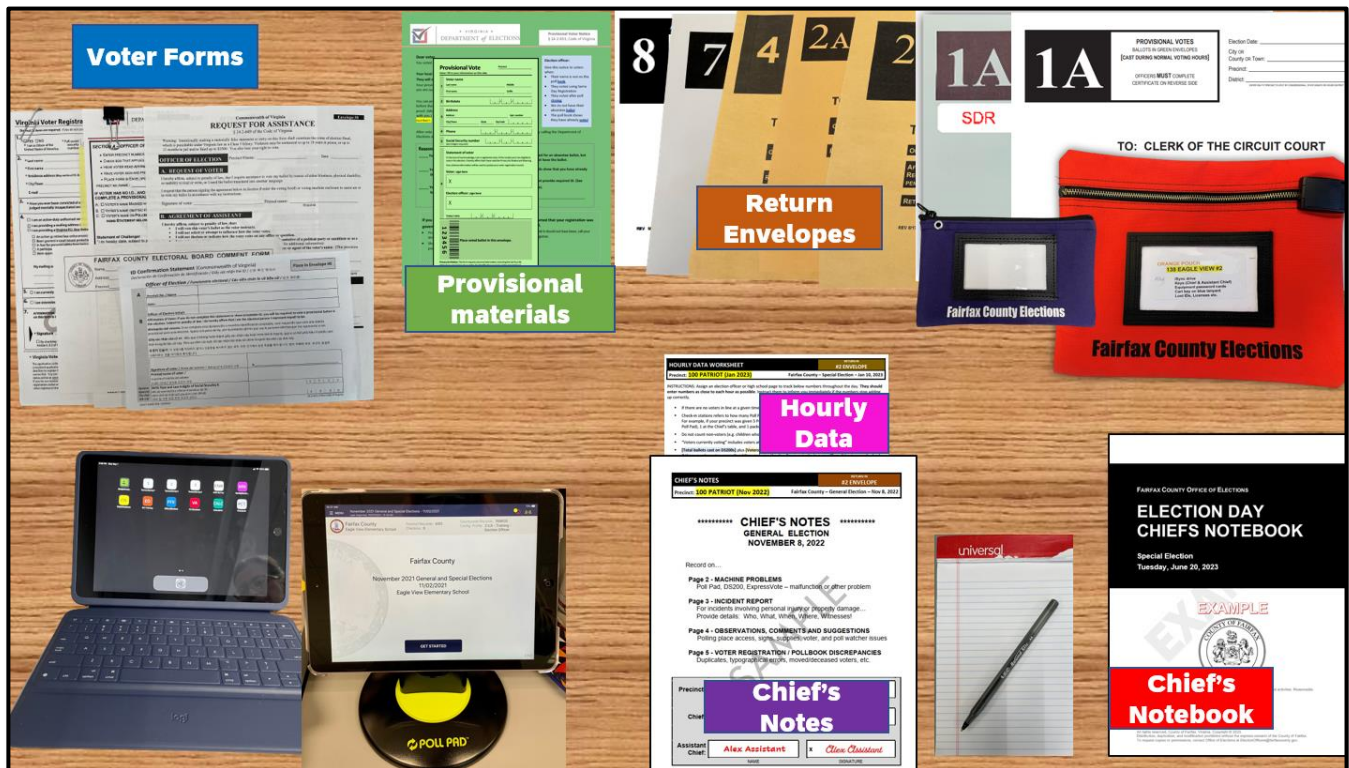
TASK 9: PREPARE VOTING AREA

- Set up cardboard privacy booths on tables.
 - Arrange booths so the voter has privacy from voters passing by or standing in line.
 - Provide an accessible table with privacy screen for wheelchair voters. And, if needed for accessibility, set up the blue hard-case privacy booth.
 - One ExpressVote ballot marking device should be set up for visibility and accessibility toward the front of the voting area but still allow for voter privacy.
 - The DS200 scanner(s) should be placed in a way so that any lines that form do not impede voters in the voting booth area.
 - Set up a table or chair near the DS200 for voters to return privacy folders and pens.
-

OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 10: PREPARE CHIEF'S TABLE AND BREAK AREA

- Prepare Chief's table and provisional voter table.
 - Set up a Chief's table on which you arrange the following items:
 - Request for Assistance forms
 - Affirmation of Eligibility forms
 - Voter Registration forms
 - Provisional ballot log, notices, and envelopes
 - Other needed forms
 - Law book
 - Absentee voter list
 - Numbered envelopes and pouches.
 - Admin Tablet
 - If desired, one Poll Pad for non-routine voter check-in
 - Set up a side table/private area with a privacy booth for provisional voters.
 - Use the **locked** equipment cart to store the blank paper ballots and other supplies. The cart can be used to store election officers' personal items, such as purses, bags, or briefcases.
 - If space permits, set up a break area (coffee pot, etc.) away from the voting area, preferably in a separate room.



OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 11: POST SIGNS, POSTERS, AND BROCHURES.

Materials needed: Signs & Posters opening guide, inside and outside signs, blue tape, clear tape, scissors, metal frames for Vote Here and parking signs, cones, yellow curbside A-frame with phone number insert.

- **Instruct one team of officers to hang signs inside and outside the polling place.**
 - Give team of officers the **Signs & Posters** opening guide.
 - Use several loops of blue tape on the back of signs.
 - Wide blue tape works better on large or laminated signs.
 - Wire frames for the outdoor signs are packed in the cardboard box with the drop box.
 - Hang signs at voter eye level, if possible.
 - A yellow “**Do You Have Your ID?**” sign at the voting room exit door can help reduce forgotten IDs.
 - Every polling place is different. You can tape signs to chairs and cones, for example.

- **Make sure that you can receive calls from curbside voters.**
 - Identify a phone number (an officer’s cell phone or your building’s office number) that curbside voters may call for assistance.
 - We pre-printed the cell phone numbers for the Chief and Assistant Chief. You may also flip these over and write any other officer’s number. Write the numbers large enough to be readable from a car.
 - Attach the number to the white “slider” with a small piece of clear tape and gently slide it into the pocket on the yellow A-frame curbside sign.
 - **IMPORTANT:** The designated curbside voting phone number must be able to receive all calls on election day. Ensure the phone’s ringer is on and loud enough to hear. Disable smartphone features that block unknown numbers. Apple calls this “Silence Unknown Callers,” and Android calls it “Block Unknown Callers.” Disable any third-party apps that block robocalls.

OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 12: RESERVE VOTER PARKING AND MARK 40-FOOT PROHIBITED AREA

Outside the polling place, there must be a 40-foot Prohibited Activities Area, which provides voters unimpeded access to the building. The large red and white Prohibited Activities posters, which should be posted near the main entrance, list the prohibited activities.

Materials needed: Marking Prohibited Area opening guide, “No Campaigning” package (rope, chalk, yellow caution tape), blue tape, cones.

- Place cones in reserved voter parking spaces, including handicapped parking.**
 - Reserve the spaces during opening procedures or shortly after polls open, well before any non-voters (for example, building staff) park in those spaces.
 - Reserve spaces as close to the voting entrance as possible, depending upon facility layout.
 - If your polling place is located in an FCPS facility, the Notice 8422 Attachment lists the minimum number of parking spaces that must be provided for voter use by each school. This notice is located in the *Guidelines* section of this notebook.
- Instruct team of officers to use Marking Prohibited Area opening guide.**
- Chief or other officers should check periodically throughout the day to make sure no prohibited activities are occurring within the 40-foot prohibited area and that the markings have not faded.

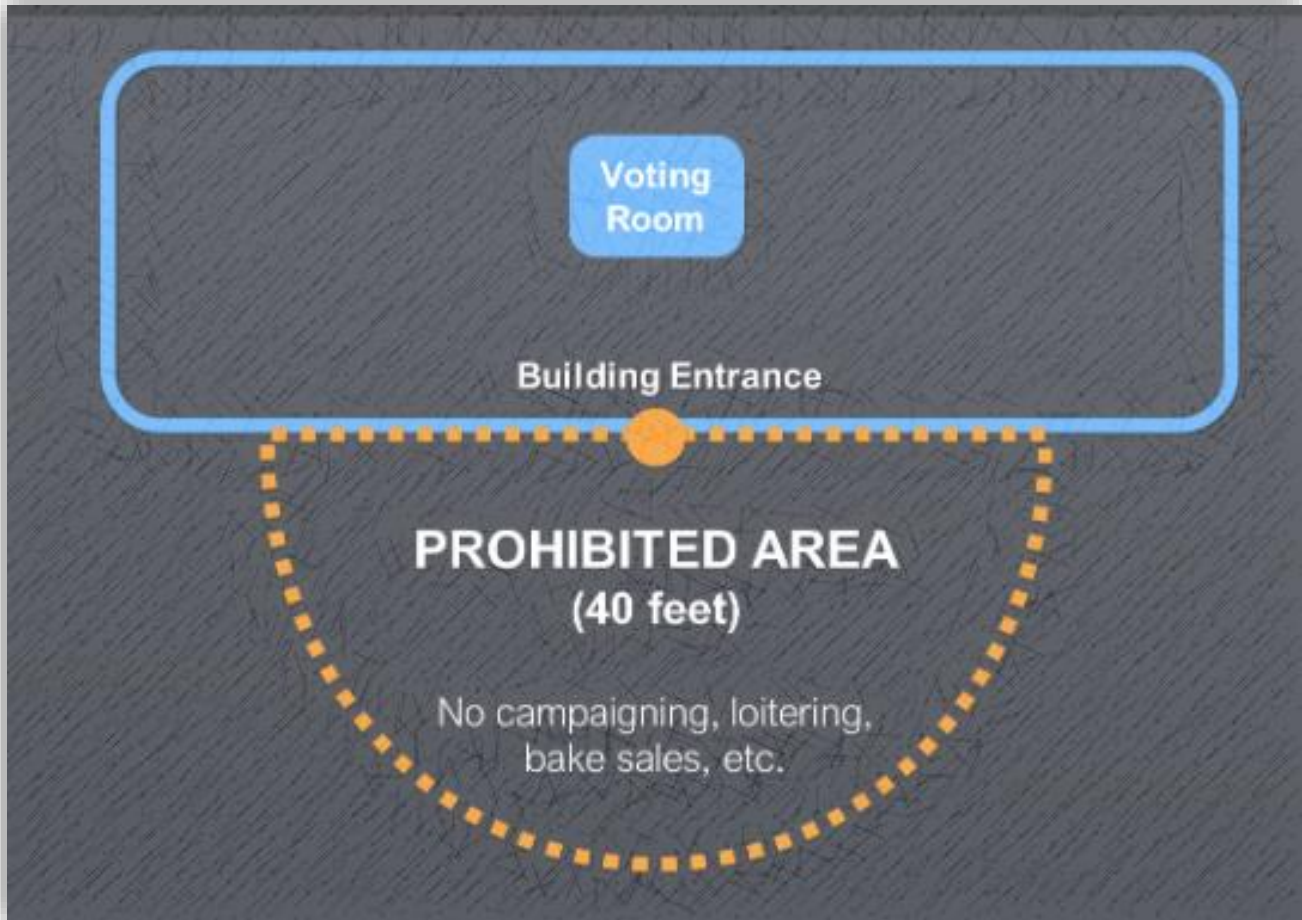
Exception: *Virginia Code § 24.2-310(E)* allows the Electoral Board to provide flexibility in the designation of the 40-foot prohibited area if an entrance to the building is from an adjoining building, or if establishing the prohibited area outside the polling place would hinder or delay a qualified voter from entering or leaving the building. This means that the 40-foot prohibited area must be contained within the building and is measured from the entrance to the voting room.

The Fairfax County precincts to which the exception applies are listed below. Check with facility staff or call our office about the specifics of marking the area.

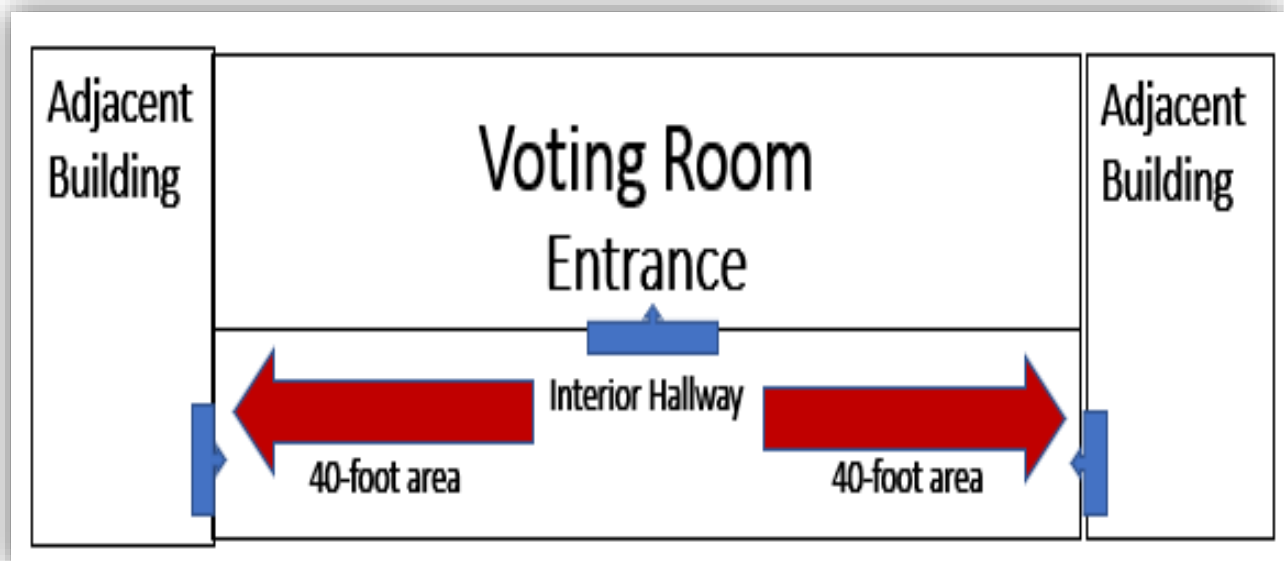
- 426 GREENSPRING
- 509 PLAZA
- 514 CROSSROADS (must **also have exterior** Prohibited Activities area marked for voters coming in from outside)

OPENING THE POLLS

Normal Exterior 40-foot Prohibited Area Marking - Example



Interior 40-foot marking for precincts with exception – Example



OPENING THE POLLS

TASK 13: INSTRUCT ELECTION OFFICERS BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN

Review security and emergency procedures.

- Remind officers and any student pages to be alert.
- Ask them to report any suspicious packages or suspicious behavior, or any individuals or groups who don't appear to belong in the polling place. Call the police if necessary.
- Go over the emergency evacuation procedures with election officers.
- Make sure all officers know the exits, evacuation route, and outside meeting place.
- Make sure all officers know the shelter-in-place location and route.
- Make sure all officers know their evacuation and shelter assignments.
- Remind officers that their personal cell phones may be kept on for emergencies but are not to be used in the polling area except for official business. Personal calls may be made on breaks away from the voting room.

Review check-in and voting machine procedures.

- Remind officers which IDs are acceptable and how to check-in voters on Poll Pad.
- Remind officers that they are non-partisan on election day!
- Remind officers to notify you if a voter leaves a ballot in the voting room.
- One officer must be posted near the DS200s at all times.
- One officer must be posted near the drop box at all times.
- Rotate positions every 2 hours during the day so no one has to stand or sit too long. All officers should work all positions. The Chief or Assistant Chief should oversee the beginning of each new shift of check-in officers to observe and confirm that they properly check in voters.

Instruct all officers to sign Compensation Sheet.

- All officers should sign the Compensation Sheet next to their assigned number. Officers can use break times or slow times to fill in the Compensation Sheet if there is insufficient time before opening the polls to do so.
- Note the time and explanation for officers who arrive late (overslept, got lost, came from another location, etc.) or leave early (became ill, family emergency, etc.).

Verify all officers have signed the Oath and the Compensation Sheet.

Swear in any officers who arrived late.

- They must also sign the Oath and Compensation Sheet.

**At 6:00 AM sharp:
Announce “the polls are open!” and
touch “Go to Voting Mode” on both DS200 scanners.**