



Protecting and serving
all of America's voters
on Election Day

9-1-1 Call Taking and Dispatching on Election Day

Preparing and planning for possible scenarios that may generate 9-1-1 calls on Election Day will assist call takers and dispatchers in asking the right questions. It will also help set the priorities of police response in congruence with an agency leadership's guidance and help maintain reasonable expectations about what the police will be able to accomplish. Therefore, it is important for policing's leaders to include communications supervisors in the planning phase of an agency's Election Day operations.

Police leaders and communications center leaders should determine and share with staff how to handle the following Election Day scenarios:

- Suspicious persons in and around the polls
- Unscheduled or unpermitted protests or demonstrations
- People displaying firearms or other weapons at or near polling locations
- People using fear or intimidation tactics to deter people from voting
- Disputes over people's eligibility to vote
- Election officials asking a person to leave the polling location who refuses to do so
- Physical obstruction of access to voting locations
- Unlawful electioneering/campaigning in and around polling locations
- Alleged interference with voting by members of a political party or organization
- Alleged police interference with the voting process
- Allegations of election fraud

Agency leaders should understand and convey pertinent local election laws and the agency's relevant policies and procedures so that leadership can collaboratively determine the guidance most suitable for call takers and dispatchers. They should also provide guidance about what messages should be conveyed to callers under uncertain or politically sensitive circumstances. Given the possible scenarios, call takers and dispatchers should be trained to gather objective facts that will best inform the police response.

In preparation for an extended Election Day period, agencies should consider upstaffing on November 3rd and having extra dispatch supervisors present while the polls are open. They should also build in dispatch protocols that automatically assign field supervisors to a police response.

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Agencies should provide guidance to call takers and dispatchers on what information they should ascertain, such as:

- What, specifically, is a person doing to interfere with the process of voting? Is it physical or verbal?
- Is a person carrying a weapon, or displaying it in a menacing or threatening way?
- What is the basis for believing a person should not be at a polling location?
- What is a person doing that constitutes campaigning or electioneering?
- Have officials at the polls attempted to mediate the dispute?
- Is this the type of dispute that police should handle, or does it concern election officials?
- Are you calling because you are having concerns yourself or because you perceive other people are?
- What specifically is a person doing to obstruct access to a polling location?

Whenever and wherever possible, municipalities should be proactively broadcasting the answers to some of these frequently asked questions on any social media platforms they maintain, as well as on any agency websites.