



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

Election Day as a Planned Event: Use of Incident Management System

Protests and demonstrations on and after Election Day may result in the need for a large-scale police response. Agencies should plan and prepare for this possibility. Treating Election Day as a pre-planned critical incident will afford police the opportunity to anticipate potential issues, coordinate with other agencies, and maximize available resources. Agencies should maximize staffing, consider standing up an Incident Management System, and coordinate with neighboring agencies.

Election Day Staffing

To ensure adequate staffing in the field, agency executives may consider:

- Instructing investigative and plainclothes personnel to be in uniform, in case they are needed to respond to potential demonstrations or provide adequate staffing for field operations while the polls are open
- Instructing administrative uniformed personnel to perform their duties in the field
- Cancelling days off and instructing uniformed personnel on regular days off to be present for duty (in accordance with fair labor practices and collective bargaining agreements)
- Realigning work shifts to maximize the number of regularly scheduled officers working at one time

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

NIMS guides all levels of government and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders from across the community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. It is traditionally reserved for catastrophic or critical unplanned events but can be activated in anticipation of planned events that will require close coordination between agencies within a jurisdiction, and between jurisdictions.

Agency executives may stand up the [NIMS command and control infrastructure](#) on Election Day to direct an appropriate response and to incorporate the assistance of neighboring jurisdictions in doing so. Using NIMS can also help an agency better coordinate the response across different first responder and emergency response agencies. Having a clear chain of command and opening the lines of interagency communication will contribute to a coordinated response to any incidents that occur at or near polling locations. It will also better prepare responders to safely facilitate and manage any protests or demonstrations that occur.

(Continued)



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

Mutual Aid

Neighboring agency executives should meet before Election Day to share plans, identify possible sources of critical incidents, determine what types of resources will be available and the extent to which they can be pooled in an emergency, and discuss contingencies if mutual aid partners are unable to respond because they have their own demonstrations and events to respond to. They should also discuss the possibility of instituting a parallel or unified NIMS. Police agencies should anticipate the possible need for enforcement action, and confer with local prosecutors to establish efficient arrest processing procedures, as well as to come to an understanding of what acts may result in what charges on Election Day, where priorities and rights may conflict, and when there will be a special emphasis on ensuring voting rights that does not occur on other days.

Standing up an Emergency Operations Center or Unified Command Center

Agency leaders should consider whether they will stand up an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or Unified Command Center (UCC), which agencies should be represented, and what level of leadership should be involved. An EOC or UCC can help coordinate across government and public safety agencies, streamline decision-making, and ensure effective communication.

Standing up the EOC ensures that continuity of operations is maintained throughout the operational period. Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, it may be necessary to establish Area Commands to monitor activity in the area of polling locations. Commanders in the field should be allowed to make operational decisions as events dictate. The EOC should serve as a resource to the field units.