25th Annual National Conference
San Diego, California

2009 Professional Practices Program

"Precinct Manual"

Richmond, Virginia

Submitted by:

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Precinct Manual

Problem: Knowing the layout of each facility that serves as a polling place is important for the management, organization and conduct of elections. However, it is sometimes difficult to remember the details of each polling place, even for small localities: where are the voters to park; where is handicapped voting; where is the handicapped entrance; where is the telephone line that has been installed for exclusive use of the election officers and which they will use to modem election results into Central Office; in what room of the facility is the voting held; where are the electrical outlets and do all of them work; who are the facility contacts; who will be opening the facility on election morning; and, are there any special requirements for the precinct? Additionally, when officers -- especially Chief Election Officers -- are assigned to a precinct in which they have never worked, they are usually unfamiliar with the facility layout and how the polling place should be set up.

Solution: The City of Richmond, Virginia developed a booklet called a "Precinct Manual" (copy attached) for each of its 64 polling places. This manual is given to each Chief Election Officer, each Voting Equipment Specialist (election officers in charge of the voting machines on Election Day), each member of the City's Electoral Board (the entity responsible for conducting elections), the General Registrar, Deputy Registrar, and all Voting Equipment Technicians. The manual details the facility features, includes photographs of the precinct for clarification and, at a minimum lists:

- Name of the facility in which the polling place is located;
- Street address;
- Map showing the location of the facility in relation to the surrounding area;
- The last date that the polling place was surveyed by a staff member;
- Telephone number of the facility contact;
- Written description of where the polling place is located within the facility, accompanied by a photograph;
- The telephone number used to reach the election officers on Election Day;
- Type of line used to modem election results;
- The telephone number that must be dialed (i.e. dialing 9 before the number to get an outside line) to modem the results;
- Whether or not the facility has back-up power in the case of power failure;
- Pictures of the parking area for voters, including handicapped parking; and,
- Pictures showing where the telephone jack is located;

Future editions of the manuals will include: pictures showing how the polling place is set up on Election Day; a map of the suggested ideal set-up for each polling place indicating stations and voter flow; the exact location of the prohibited area boundary; and, nearby alternative voting sites in the event of emergencies.
**Administration:** Prior to each election, staff visit the City’s polling places and:

- Make notes of any changes to the physical structure;
- Inspect the electrical outlets with a voltage reader to assure that sufficient power will be available for the voting machines on election day;
- Inspect telephone lines used for contact to central office and the modem of the election results to make sure that they are working and that the telephone number on file is the correct number (this is done by the staff person using a cellphone to call the number while they are actually at the facility);
- Make sure any furniture and dedicated phone jacks are labeled in red marked with “Voter Registration” for the ease of discovery by the election officers;
- Report needed repairs or damages (i.e. broken or non functioning electrical outlets) so they can be fixed prior to election day;
- Talk to the facility contact person to verify that all information for the election is up-to-date; and,
- Update photographs as necessary.

**Benefits:**

1. The City of Richmond previously relied upon the Chief Election Officers to visit the polling places before Election Day to make sure all was ready. This did not always result in problems being identified so that they could be addressed before voting began. Under the new process, problems are accurately identified and addressed before the election.
2. The pre-election day visits are building closer and improved relationships with the facility administrators.
3. The precinct inspections sometimes identify better voting locations inside the facility.
4. Helps in developing alternative plans for emergencies, power outages, and other incidences which might impede or interfere with the voting process;
5. Aids the Chief of Elections with a pictorial guide of where the polling place is and how it should be set up.
6. Central office staff can visualize the polling place layout if necessary to discuss it with the Election Officers while they are at the precinct.
7. The Electoral Board members and other visitors find it easier to locate the Precincts with color photos and instructions.
8. Voting Machine Technicians are visually prepared to help with modern problems if they occur.
9. The manual facilitates off-site discussions of the polling places with individuals who might not be familiar with the building.
10. The election officers get a “kick” out of seeing their polling place documented.
PRECINCT 114
General Information

Name: Humphrey Calder Community Center

Address: 414 North Thompson Street

Date last surveyed: September 10, 2008

Contact Phone Number: 646-1780

Location of Precinct in building: Gym

Phone number for precinct use: 646-1737

Type of modem line: Direct line

Location of Modem Line: On wall in gym

Modem Phone Number: 9-646-6240 (must use pre-fix 9)

Back-up power in precinct: No
PRECINCT 114
Humphrey Calder Community Center

Precinct located in the gym

Handicap Parking lot
Telephone jack on wall in gym
For precinct and modem use

Entrance doors to gym
Phone jack is located to right of door on wall
Voter Precinct 114
City of Richmond, VA
Geographic Information Systems

Polling Place:
Humphrey Calder Community Center
414 North Thompson Street