

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN AUDIT (or Recount)

Bonner County
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The primary point of an audit is to verify not only the final winners/losers in races and questions but also all the supporting data, verifying the exact counts are correct, etc. As the programming comment goes: “Garbage in Garbage out.”

KEEP REALLY GOOD RECORDS, REPORTS AND NOTES

From the very outset of the election cycle it is helpful to keep really good records. “Notes” because there are always strange things that happen. Glitches in the Matrix that we understand in the moment we might not remember a year or more down the road.

Example: We had a person want to change party after the registration deadline. We didn’t catch that fast enough, and after changing their party using our EPB, it wouldn’t let us issue a ballot to someone who was eligible to vote in November. We had to issue an emergency ticket and make a note, which explained it later during reconciliation why our ballots didn’t match the TENEX ballots issued count.

I keep a running journal of “issues/notes” associated with a specific election just in case it ever comes up or needs clarification. This is a compilation of all sorts of random stuff that we file with that election electronically for posterity...

It REALLY helps.

PRINT DAILY ABSENTEE RETURNED REPORTS AND RECONCILE DAILY

This eliminates one way a count can be off. It is *way* easier to find/ resolve a count that is off if you sleuth it out the same day it happens, rather than to trying to figure it out later when your recollection is cold. To the degree you can keep everything balanced daily, *do it!*

On “opening absentee ballots day” we recount each batch by date and verify it is what the report shows. This doesn’t do much, but does eliminate one way a discrepancy could pop up later.

On the opening absentee ballot subject, make sure you note in the batch report and on your “notes” page when an absentee affidavit envelope or privacy envelope is returned EMPTY or with MULTIPLE ballots (husband & wife for instance). In the first case your report will show fewer counted than TENEX says, and the second case you’ll have to ignore BOTH ballots (and have a lower vote count than TENEX shows).

BALLOT SEPARATION ELECTION NIGHT

On election night, keep the Election Day (R) ballots separated by precinct. And keep all early votes together and absentee votes together. This also helps with an audit if reconciliation to R/A/E is a part of it.

By doing this you can use, if necessary and allowed, your Election Day (R) ballots as your test deck for a pure precinct, do a hand-count tally, then run your counting equipment on that same group of ballots to verify accuracy. Then you can (if allowed) use your equipment for the balance of the mixed A & E ballots, which are sure to be comingled in a massive way.

Also, with those who count with machine and use batches, keep those batches clean with their report rubber banded to each batch. Then, as you put those batches into a ballot box for safe keeping, make a list of what is going inside. We list the precinct, the batch number, and initial. Then tape that onto the outside of the box so you always know what is there in case a recount or audit is requested.

Example:

<p>NOVEMBER 2, 2021</p> <p>CONSOLIDATED ELECTION</p> <p>SCANNED BALLOTS</p> <p>BOX #10</p> <p>BATCHES / PRECINCTS IN THIS BOX:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>LOADED BY: _____</p> <p>TIME: _____</p>
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CHAIN OF CUSTODY/ SEAL LOG

Keep a good chain of custody log, especially as to seals. When we had some boxes taken by the Sheriff's Office due to a recount request we made the deputy acknowledge the seals on each box, sign for them, and give him a photocopy of that list of seals. Upon return for recount day we checked those seals against that same log. Have seal logs pre-printed ready to fill in.

Example:

BONNER COUNTY ELECTIONS November 2, 2021 Consolidated Election		SCANNED BALLOTS SEAL LOG
	SEAL No.	Done By
BOX #1	0853126	OK
BOX #2	0770956	NT
BOX #3	0788800	OK
BOX #4	0853166	OK
BOX #5		
BOX #6		
BOX #7		

POST ELECTION STORAGE

When you store (long term) your election "stuff" (ballots, envelopes, etc.) be very descriptive of every precinct, ballot type, envelope type (date range), etc. Also, if you put like things in the same box you can mark the dispose of date on that same label (we use the same month-last day and the appropriate 2 year out or whatever). Have these forms pre-printed in a bright colored card stock and ready to go. Don't let anything get put into a box without having some reference to that type of "stuff" on that label. I recommend putting the label on the end of the box, not the top so when they are stored/ stacked you can see readily what is inside each box when you later need to access such information, for whatever reason.

Example:

Box No.	Records Date
21-124	11/2/2021
11/2/2021 Consolidated Election	
AIRP, ALGO, BALD, BEAC, BLUE, CARW, COLA, COLB, DOVR, EAPR, EDGM, GRCK, HUMB, KELS, KOOT, LAEL, ODEN, OLDT, SELL, SOSD, WASH, WMND, and WPRV/TW reports, PIA, E-2A, COLB EPB	
5 Years	Destruction Date: 11/30/2026

MISCELLANEOUS

One thing we did not do post-election was affix any kind of seal to our banker boxes that our Nov. 2020 ballots were stored in. They were marked, packaged, and taped up but did not have legal seals of any type. We now use these:

ULINE 1-800-295-5510

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Security Strips on a Roll - 2 x 5 3/4", Blue

Guards against theft and provides clear evidence of tampering.

- Sequentially numbered to identify, track packages.
- "OPENED VOID" message appears if tape is lifted.
- Meets TSA regulations.

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SPECIFY COLOR:

MODEL NO.	SIZE	MIL	STRIPS/ROLL	ROLLS/CASE	LBS./CASE	PRICE PER ROLL				COLOR	IN STOCK SHIPS TODAY
						1	6	24	48+		
S-16981BLU	2 x 5 3/4"	3.9	330	24	17	\$44	\$41	\$38	\$36	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue ▾	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="button" value="ADD"/>

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SAME DAY SHIPPING | HUGE SELECTION IN STOCK | SHIPS FROM 12 LOCATIONS

Fortunately our November 2020 ballots were taped and labeled, and in our safe room. But we now use these seals as an extra level of security/ public confidence measure.

SECURE STORAGE

As to where you store the ballots post-election, we have a safe room that only I have a physical key for, and only 3 of us know the combination for. Each of our keypad combinations are unique to us individually so we can track who was in and when.

It is also alarmed and the alarm goes to my phone and my chief deputy's phone.

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE BOOSTER

Our regular pre-election bulk ballot room, election night counting room and hallways connecting the two, and where we store our counting equipment all have security alarms and video cameras. We keep the counting area where we deal with loose ballots rolling with a live feed during opening ballots and all the Election Day action until the following day post-completion.

INVITES

Demonstrating our desire to be fully transparent to the media, the parties and our voters is helpful and appropriate, as we work for them.

I have a pretty good working relationship with my various media groups, and personally invite all relevant media parties to observe everything election related. That always seems to be a good move. I also let the chairs of the Republican and Democratic Central Committees know what is going on, and to personally request their presence and participation if possible or that of their staff.

FINAL NOTE

If an audit is requested of a county like it was mine (well, I volunteered), it is my firm belief that the SOS is *rooting* for us to succeed as much as we are. Just as we counties are rooting for each other. By doing well we all make each other look better and make the SOS look better too. We all have a vested interest in having our audits or recounts go as well as possible. We counties are actually on the same team as the SOS (both now and whoever holds that office in the future), and it gives a lot of peace remembering that.