Lane County Elections

Lane County Elections is happy to introduce a livestream of ballot processing activities and documentation to accompany each process!

This informational packet includes a tentative schedule of ballot processing events, as well as a description of the activities taking place in each area.

Have questions about what you see? Comments are turned off but you may contact our office to find out more.

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Lane County Elections - YouTube
Mail Ballot Processing
Tentative Schedule

1. Receive
   10/24, 10/26, 10/28, 10/31, 11/2, 11/3, 11/4, 11/7, and 11/8 (USPS ballots received daily)

2. Sort
   10/24, 10/26, 10/28, 10/31, 11/1, 11/2, 11/3, 11/4, 11/7, and 11/8

3. Signature Review
   10/24, 10/26, 10/28, 10/31, 11/1, 11/2, 11/3, 11/4, 11/7, and 11/8

4. Deconstruction

5. Reconciliation

6. Scan

7. Adjudicate

8. Store
   No scheduled transfer, ballots moved to secure storage throughout the process.
Mail Ballot Processing

1. **Receive**
   Ballot envelopes are received through the mail and secure ballot drop boxes.

2. **Sort**
   Ballot envelopes are sorted into batches. Batch size will not exceed 200 ballot envelopes.

3. **Signature Review**
   The signature on every ballot envelope is reviewed and compared to the signature in a voter’s record.

4. **Deconstruction**
   Ballot envelopes are opened by teams. Team members are never the same party. Ballots are extracted from the envelopes and prepared for scanning.

5. **Reconciliation**
   Damaged ballots, empty return envelopes or envelopes with two ballots are outstacked and batches are reconciled.

6. **Scan**
   Ballots are scanned using high-speed scanners that are tested for accuracy before every election.

7. **Adjudicate**
   Overvoted and blank ballots, ballots with stray marks, and ballots with write-ins are manually adjudicated.

8. **Store**
   Ballots are stored in sealed containers and retained for at least 22 months following each election.
Previous steps: Voters deposit ballots in a drop box

This step: Receive

Teams of election workers, never of the same major political party, travel together to collect ballots from locked ballot boxes

- Drivers only have keys for assigned ballot boxes on their route
- Drivers may visit boxes more than once per day
- Ballots are transferred to a secure transport carrier
- Transport carrier is sealed and chain of custody form is completed
- Drivers collect from all boxes on their route then return all transport carriers to the election office
- Receiving staff will work with drivers to verify seals and complete chain of custody log
- Location tracking board will be updated
- Transport carriers will be flagged with box location information and moved into sorter room
- Chain of custody log will be put back into service until log is full, then retained as part of the official election record

Next steps: Sort, Signature Review, Deconstruction, Reconciliation, Scan, Adjudication and Store
Previous steps: Receive

This step: Sort

Staff remove ballots from transport carriers, working on ballots from one drop site at a time.

Ballots are faced in mail trays, all in the same orientation. All “white” or non-ballot mail is removed.

Envelope contents are gently tamped to insure that no contents are cut when the ballots are opened.

Ballots are then run through the sorter, by drop site location.

Sorter opens ballots where the envelope signature is matched to the registration card signature by ASV, and sorts the good ballots into groups of 200.

Ballots that do not match in ASV, are sorted to specified bins for staff review.

Next steps: Signature Review, Deconstruction, Reconciliation, Scan and Store
Previous steps: Receive and Sort

This step: Signature Review

Signature Review is initiated by the Automatic Signature Verification (ASV) process. ASV is a software program that compares signatures on file in the Statewide Voter Registration System, detecting signature characteristics that are indistinguishable to the human eye. It analyzes signatures by comparing geometric shapes, fragments, and trajectories. If the ASV software program determines the signature may not be a match, the ballot envelope signature is then verified by a person.

If a signature is found to be “discrepant”, the voter is mailed a letter and is given the opportunity to “cure” no later than 21 days after the election.

Next steps: Deconstruction, Reconciliation, Scan, Adjudication and Store
Previous steps: Receive, Sort, and Signature Review

This step: Deconstruction

Ballot envelope batches are stored in green mail trays. A green tray is married up to an empty cardboard ballot transport box (ballot box), a label is added to the ballot box and completed by Sorting Room staff to document batch information and the starting count of ballot envelopes.

Deconstruction teams will collect a green tray, along with its matching ballot box, and a tray header.

When both deconstruction members are present, they will:
- Enter information into the tray header
- Distribute the ballot envelopes between the team (voter information face down)
- Separate the ballot from the envelope (secrecy sleeves are no longer used)
  - Monitor for two ballots in one envelope, empty envelopes, and damaged ballots.
- Outstack any troubled ballot envelopes into red mail trays
- Fish zip tie through empty envelopes
- Unfold ballots
- Count ballots
- Reconcile ballot count and complete tray header
  - Floor supervisors are available to help troubleshoot

Upon completion of a batch, deconstruction members will:
- Prepare empty envelopes for storage
- Place flattened ballots in ballot box and place completed tray header on top
- Deliver empty envelopes and ballot box to check-in station
- Begin a new batch.

Next steps: Reconciliation, Scan, Adjudication and Store
Previous steps: Receive, Sort, Signature Review and Deconstruction

**This step: Reconciliation**

All ballot envelopes are tracked on a reconciliation log that tracks every ballot batch through the entire process. When a ballot is outstacked during any process, it is tracked to ensure it comes back into the process, or is accounted for in another reconciliation report.

Here are some examples of next steps for outstacked ballots:

2 ballots found in one return envelope:

a. Reconciliation log is updated to show total number of ballots to be counted is one less than expected (one envelope removed from count).

b. Voter’s ballot is rejected in the statewide voter registration system and will appear on a rejected ballot report.

Torn ballot, missing one half:

a. Reconciliation log is updated to show total number of ballots to be counted is one less than expected (ballot removed from batch).

b. Voter’s ballot will be securely stored until it is re-batched into an adjudication batch and adjudicated. This entire flow will be captured in the reconciliation log.

Next steps: Scan, Adjudication and Store
Previous steps: Receive, Sort, Signature Review, Deconstruction and Reconciliation

This step: Scan

Ballot boxes are opened by counting room staff and scanned. Ballot box counts are matched to tray headers to ensure the exact number of ballots received deconstruction are counted.

Unscannable ballots may be outstacked to be adjudicated in a new batch. If this occurs, the unscannable ballot will be securely stored and counting room staff will notify the reconciliation team who will update the reconciliation log.

Ballots and tray headers are returned to their ballot box. Ballot boxes are sealed and moved to secure storage.

Next steps: Adjudication and Store
Previous steps: Receive, Sort, Signature Review, Deconstruction, Reconciliation and Scan

This step: Adjudication

Adjudication teams are made up of election workers, never from the same major political party, who work together, using the Oregon Vote By Mail Manual, to ensure the voter’s correct choice is correctly recorded by the voting system.

Adjudication teams also ensure that choices from damaged or unscannable ballots are correctly recorded by the voting system.

All original and adjudicated ballots are flagged and can be married together later for review/audit purposes.

Next steps: Store
Previous steps: Receive, Sort, Signature Review, Deconstruction, Reconciliation, Scan, and Adjudication

**This step: Store**

All election records are securely stored in accordance with OAR 165-150-0035. During an election cycle, access to secure ballot storage is limited to authorized, sworn election staff. Anyone entering with an authorized, sworn authorized election staff member must sign a secure ballot storage access log.

Next steps: Retaining records according to election retention policy