

CALHOUN COUNTY ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION

mary.orta@calhouncotx.org

PH: 361-553-4440

211 S. Ann St. Suite 103
Port Lavaca, TX 77979



CENTRAL COUNT STATION PLAN

A. PURPOSE:

Section 127.001 of the Texas Election Code ("TEC") allows for the establishment of one or more Central Count Stations ("CSS"). Section 127.007 of the TEC requires the Manager of the CCS to "establish and implement a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station.

B. LOCATION:

Calhoun County Central Counting Station is located at the Calhoun County Courthouse, Commissioners Court Room 211 S. Ann St. Port Lavaca, TX 77979.

C. CENTRAL COUNT STATION PERSONNEL:

The following are the roles and responsibilities inside the CCS, as contained in Sections 127.002-127.006 of the Texas Election Code:

- The Election Administrator will serve as the Central Count Station Manager to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- The CCS Manager or Voting Systems Clerk will serve as the Tabulation Supervisor to operate the automatic tabulating equipment.
- The Assistant Election Administrator will serve as the Assistant Tabulation Supervisor to assist the Tabulation Supervisor in operating of the automatic tabulation equipment if applicable.
- The Presiding Judges will serve to maintain order at the Central Count Station.
- The Central Count Station Manager of the CCS will serve to administer oaths to CCS personnel, and receive ballots for tabulation.
- The Alternate Judge of the CCS will serve in the capacity of the Presiding Judge in the event that the Presiding Judge is not present or available.
- Appointment of Central Count Station Clerks can occur, as needed, by the Manager, the Presiding Judge, or the Alternate Judge.
- All Central Count Station personnel must meet the requirements as set forth by Chapter 127 of the Texas Election Code.

D. TESTING PROCEDURES:

Section 127.091 establishes a series of required testing of the automatic tabulating used for counting ballots at a central count station.

- a. Logic & Accuracy Test
 - i. Conduct of test by the custodian of the automatic tabulating equipment shall publish notice of the date, hours, and place of the test conducted under Section 127.093 (b) in a newspaper at least 48 hours before the date of the test.
 - ii. When conducting a test for a primary election, the custodian of the tabulating equipment must notify the county chair at least 48 hours in advance of the test.
 - iii. The test is open to the public.
 - iv. The automatic tabulating equipment may not be used to count ballots voted in an election until a test is successful.
 - v. On completing each of the Logic & Accuracy test, the CCS Manager shall place the test ballots and other test materials in a container provided for that purpose and seal the container so it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. The test materials shall remain sealed for the period for preserving the precinct election records.
 - vi. The container may not be unsealed unless the contents are necessary to conduct a test under Section 127 of the Texas Election Code or other official proceeding under this code.

E. PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING THE CENTRAL COUNT STATION:

Section 87.0241 of the Texas Election Code dictates when an entity may convent to count ballots.

The Central Counting Station will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the Central Counting Station Manager and the Presiding Judges.

The Central Counting Station and the Ballot Board will begin the process to count Early Voting Mail Ballots.

The Central Counting Station and the Ballot Board will next begin the process to count Early Voting In-Person Ballots.

The Central Counting Station and Ballot Board will begin the process to count Election Day voting ballots at 7:00p.m.

The Central Counting Station and Ballot Board will begin to process and count accepted provisional ballots and accepted late ballots by mail within 9 days of Election Day. Section 65.051 of the Texas Election Code.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS:

Section 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a required oath for all CCS personnel. The administration of oaths must take place prior to those individuals commencing any of their duties at the central count station.

For use in Primary Elections, General Elections for State and County Officers and Elections ordered by the Governor:

“I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter’s vote is accepted and counted, and that only the ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to reflect the voter’s intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present and will work on in the presence of a member of a political party different from my own. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election.” *For use in all other elections that do not contain party affiliations:*

“I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter’s vote is accepted and counted, and that only ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to correctly reflect the voter’s intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election.”

G. INTAKE OF BALLOTS, AND ELECTION SUPPLIES:

Sections 129.051 and 129.052 of the Texas Election Code require the general custodian of election records to develop certain procedures related to inventory control and chain of custody of voting system equipment and electronic media associated with this equipment, providing for verification of equipment identifiers, verifications of seals, and verification of chain of custody.

- Election Judge, or their designee, brings in the ballot box containing the voter paper ballots to the Calhoun County Central Count Station.
- Intake personnel will remove the external seal applied prior to leaving the voting location. Next, they verify the serial number of the equipment as shown on the transfer form. Finally, confirmation of the intact seal on the ballot box is the same number as on the Official Register of Seals.
- Intake personnel confirms seal matches what is on the log.
- The CCS Manager receives the ballot box and proceeds to insert the ballots into the ES&S DS450 for tabulation and tally the totals. The Presiding Judge and CCS Manager or designee, shall verify that the vote totals on the form with number of ballots cast match the vote totals on the printed results form.

- After uploading all precinct results to the central accumulator, the election official must verify and document that the central accumulator's total number of votes cast in an election matches the number of signatures on the Poll Pad check in number. If there is a discrepancy, the Presiding Judge of the CCS in conjunction with the CCS Manager shall determine if a further audit is necessary.

H. DUPLICATION OF BALLOTS:

Duplication of certain damaged ballots may occur if the cannot be read with the equipment or damaged beyond use.

- The Presiding Judge, with any assistants deemed necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballot in accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code.
- At least two members of differing political parties shall participate in the duplications of ballots.

I. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT:

At the direction of the Presiding Judge, CCS members will resolve any voter intent questions on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable.

- Ballots, not damaged, once resolved, shall be counted.
- Damaged ballots, unable to be processed by the tabulator scan system will be duplicated. Prior to duplicating the ballot, the Presiding Judge, or an appointed ballot board team, with members from differing parties, will determine the manner in which the voter's intent was deciphered.

J. TABULATION PROCEDURES:

- The Ballot Board will review and accept all eligible Voting by Mail Ballots.
- The Presiding Judge and Alternate Presiding Judge of Ballot Board will confirm seals match the Seal Log for Early Voting Ballot Boxes.
- Early Voting Ballot Boxes will be opened on Election Day by the Tabulation Supervisor. Once seals have been verified, ballots will be given to CCS Staff for processing.
- After all Early Voting and by Mail Ballots have been scanned, results will be saved to a USB drive, then be read into the Election Ware Results Module.

Election Day

- A licensed peace officer will be posted and/or on standby at the Calhoun County Courthouse 211 S. Ann St. Port Lavaca, TX where Central Count is to convene to ensure safety and security.
- Beginning at the discretion of the Presiding Judges of Central Count, and the Tabulation Supervisor the process will begin.

- Before any data from the USB drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the DS450 and signed by the Tabulation Supervisor and Presiding Judges of Central Count.
- All USBs will be read into the Election Ware Results Module by the Tabulation Supervisor with tabulation assistant(s) present.
- Any un-scanned approved ballots will be scanned in at the DS450, and any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the Ballot Board under the direction of the Presiding Judge.
- Results of the remaining un-scanned ballots will be saved onto a USB drive and loaded into the Election Ware Results Module.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to that point, will be tabulated before 7p.m., but in no case will results reports be created before 7p.m.

K. RECONCILIATION:

The process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done in three ways:

- Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from the Poll Pad, minus any ballots thrown out (e.g. spoiled, unable to be read by Scan), to the total number of ballots cast.
- Early Voting by Mail – Compare the number of ballots entered on the Ballot Transmittal Form from the early voting ballot board to the number of ballots counted. (Sec. 87.021, 87.1221 TEC)
- Election Day – Compare the number of voters on the Poll Pad, and the Omissions List entries, minus any ballots thrown out (e.g. spoiled), to the total number of ballots cast. (Sec. 127.007 (b) TEC)

L. PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS:

Under Section 127.127 of the TEC, the Tabulation Supervisor, Assistant Tabulation Supervisor or the Site Support Representative are the only ones authorized to operate the tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted. After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the Tabulations Supervisor or Assistant Tabulation Supervisor of the CCS are responsible for preparing the precinct election returns. The Presiding Judge is required to sign the precinct returns to certify their accuracy.

The printed “precinct by precinct” report that has been adjusted to include any hand-counted ballots (if necessary) constitutes the certified precinct returns (Section 127.131 (e) TEC).

The unofficial election results shall be released as soon as available after the polls close. Alternatively, the Presiding Judge of the CCS, in cooperation with the Elections Administrator may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted (Section 121.1311 TEC).

Unofficial election results will be released via in person or public media beginning no earlier than 7:00 p.m. Election Day results will be release incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in (Section 121.1311 TEC)

M. REPORTING RESULTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

For certain elections, including Primary Elections, the General Elections for State and County Officers, and Constitutional Amendment Elections, the SOS is required to tabulate the unofficial results statewide (Section 68.001 TEC). This information must be reported to the SOS through their online portal or via telephone.

1. The Tabulations Supervisor will prepare reports with the requested totals for the Secretary of State.
2. The Calhoun County Elections Administrator or designated staff will report the totals to the SOS using the online portal via TEAMS.

N. POLL WATCHERS

Poll watchers are entitled to be present during the time the CCS has convened for the purpose of processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station” (Section 33.055 TEC).

A watcher may not leave during voting hours on Election Day without the presiding judge’s permission if the counting of ballots at the central count station has begun (Section 33.055 (b) TEC)

The poll watcher must deliver both their certificate of completion for the Texas SOS Poll Watcher Training and their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the CCS. The Presiding Judge must countersign and retain their certificate of appointment and certificate of completion.

Poll watcher(s) are permitted to stand, sit, or move freely without obstructing the conduct of the election or interfering with the duties of the CSS personnel, while still being able to observe all activities (Section 33.015 TEC).

All activities of poll watcher(s) shall comply with Sections 33.015, 33.055, 33.056, 33.060 and the current *Poll Watchers Guide* issued by the Secretary of State.

O. DELIVERY OF MATERIALS TO THE GENERAL CUSTODIAN OF ELECTION RECORDS:

After the completion of the counting of ballots both on Election Day and after Election Day, if necessary, voted ballots, electronic media, election records, and election equipment will be retained by this office, who is the general custodian of election records, through the appropriate retention period.