

Operational and Communications Toolkit for Polling Place Closures



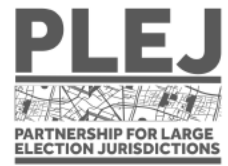
As an election official, ensuring continuity of operations after a polling place closure (whether planned or not), requires prompt and effective action. This generic resource includes [operational response best practices](#) as well as starter templates for [social media](#), [press releases](#), and [voter-facing information](#) that can be easily adapted for any election office.

Operational Response Best Practices

Below is a list of starter steps to consider as you navigate polling place closures. They are organized based on the situation and timing of the issue. "Preparation" includes steps you can take now to be well-situated for unexpected changes.

Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
Preparation	<p>Prepare talking points and holding statement in case of media inquiries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These should be brief, transparent, and action-oriented: why did the polling place close or move? What can voters expect? Whom can they contact with questions? <p>Review COOP and contingency plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure these documents are up-to-date, including reviewing names and contact information for staff. • The plans should include communications, such as which staff are responsible for communicating with voters, the media, etc. • (See FAC COOP Plan Template) <p>Be ready to communicate with key stakeholders quickly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and maintain an email distribution list with key stakeholders' contact information, and their key personnel. • Have a list handy with key stakeholders' direct contact information. <p>Identify Alternative Locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate nearby facilities that can serve as backup or temporary polling places (schools, community centers, libraries). • Ensure these locations are accessible and compliant with ADA requirements. • Create a document that includes all relevant information about backup facilities, including how much advance notice they'd need to activate, contact person and backup contact, and address. • Investigate the option of mobile voting units.
Polling Place Pulls Out or Must Be Relocated (Before Election Day)	<p>Assess the Situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the cause and scope of the closure. • Evaluate the impact on voters, including the number of affected polling places and the potential number of displaced voters. <p>Communicate with Non-Voter Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with municipal clerks and/or other local government officials. • Inform election staff, poll workers, and volunteers about the situation and next steps. • Notify the relevant authorities and emergency services if necessary.

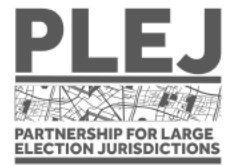
Polling Place Closure Operational Response Best Practices



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Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
	<p>Activate Contingency Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to your county's emergency and continuity of operations plans responsive to matters at hand (i.e. natural disasters, structural concerns, etc) ● Mobilize any pre-identified backup polling locations.
<p>Polling Place Pulls Out or Must Be Relocated (Emergency)</p>	<p>Assess the Situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine the cause and scope of the closure, including whether the site will be out of commission for a few hours or the entire day. ● Evaluate the impact on voters, including the number of affected polling places and the potential number of displaced voters. <p>Activate Emergency Communication Plan with Non-Voter Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Notify the relevant authorities and emergency services if necessary. ● Communicate with municipal clerks and/or other local government officials. ● Inform election staff, poll workers, and volunteers about the situation and next steps. <p>Activate Contingency Plans and Backup Polling Locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to your county's emergency and continuity of operations plans. ● Contact the administrators of the backup locations to arrange immediate setup. ● Arrange for the quick transfer of voting machines, ballots, and other necessary supplies to the new locations. ● Ensure IT support is available to set up and test equipment at the new polling sites.
<p>Voter Communication</p>	<p>Notify Voters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use multiple communication channels to inform voters of the changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website and Social Media: Post updates on the county's official website and social media platforms. ○ Email and Text Alerts: Send notifications to registered voters who have provided contact information. ○ Local Media: Work with local TV, radio stations, and newspapers to broadcast the information. ○ Direct Mail: If time allows, send postcards or letters to affected voters. <p>Signage at Original Locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place clear and visible signs at the closed polling places directing voters to the new locations. ● Ensure signs are in multiple languages if necessary. ● Depending on staff capacity and the situation, assign a staff member (with name tag, emergency vest, etc.) to the original location to answer questions and redirect voters. <p>(See Social Media Resources, Press Release Template, and Voter-Facing Notification Template below)</p>

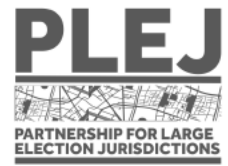
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Planning Phase	Steps to Consider
Election Day Operations	<p>Staffing and Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Deploy poll workers to the new locations.● Provide any necessary training or briefing on the changes and emergency procedures.● Depending on staff capacity and the situation, assign a staff member (with name tag, emergency vest, etc.) to the original location to answer questions and redirect voters. <p>Voter Assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Set up a hotline for voters to call for information and assistance.● Ensure there are provisions for providing transportation to voters if needed.
Post-Election Review	<p>Evaluate and Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Conduct a thorough review of the incident and the response.● Gather feedback from election staff, volunteers, and voters to identify any issues or areas for improvement. <p>Document Lessons Learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Update the continuity of operations plan based on the experience and feedback.● Ensure all changes are documented and communicated to relevant personnel.
Compliance and Legal Considerations	<p>Regulatory Compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensure all actions taken comply with state and federal election laws and regulations.● Document the closure and response actions thoroughly to address any potential legal challenges. <p>Coordination with State Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Inform state election officials of the situation and the steps taken to mitigate the impact.● Seek guidance or assistance if needed.

Polling Place Closure Social Media Templates



Here are some generic sample social media posts addressing polling place closures. These examples are designed to be clear, concise, and to provide essential information to voters, encouraging them to verify before heading out. These are just a starting point though. They can (and should) be adapted to meet your particular office needs and the urgency of the situation.

Platform	Sample Text
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attention Voters: Due to [briefly describe the situation], some polling places are closed. Please check our online voter information portal or call [Phone Number] to confirm your voting location before heading out to vote. #ElectionDay #VoteSafe ● Weather Alert: Some polling locations may be affected. Verify your polling place online at [Website URL] or call us at [Phone Number] before you go. Stay safe and make sure your vote counts! #YourVoteMatters #Election2024 ● [Polling Place Name/Location] is closed due to [reason]. Check [Website URL] or call [Phone Number] for new polling sites. We're here to help! #ElectionUpdate #YourVoteMatters
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attention Voters! Due to [insert reason, e.g. weather], some polling places have changed. Before heading to the polls, please visit our online voter information portal [Website URL] or call our office at [Phone Number] to confirm your polling location. Your vote is crucial, and we want to ensure it counts! #Election2024 #VoteSafe ● Weather Alert for Voters: Due to [severe weather], some polling locations might be affected. We urge you to verify your polling place online at [Website URL] or by calling us at [Phone Number] before heading out. Stay safe and ensure your voice is heard! #YourVoteMatters #ElectionDay ● **Important Election Update!** Due to unforeseen circumstances, [Polling Place Name/Location] is closed today. If you were planning to vote there, please visit our online voter information portal at [Website URL] or call our hotline at [Phone Number] for the nearest alternative polling location. Your vote matters, and we are here to ensure you can cast your ballot. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation! #Vote2024 #ElectionDay
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attention Voters! Some polling places are closed due to [reason]. Verify your polling place online or call us at [Phone Number] before heading out. #VoteSafe #ElectionDay #YourVoteMatters ● Weather Alert: Some polling locations might be affected. Check our online voter information portal or call [Phone Number] to confirm your polling place. Stay safe and vote! #Election2024 #VoteSafe ● **Polling Place Alert!** If you were planning to vote at [Polling Place Name/Location], please note that it is closed today due to [reason]. Head over to [Website URL] or call [Phone Number] to find out where

Polling Place Closure Social Media Templates

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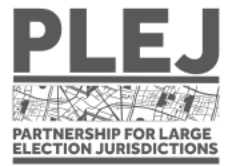
Platform	Sample Text
	<p>you can vote instead. We're here to help make sure your vote counts! #Vote2024 #ElectionDay #YourVoteMatters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know Where To Vote? Before heading to the polls, double-check your voting location on our website or by calling [Phone Number]. Every vote counts! #Vote2024 #ReadySetVote
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention Voters: Due to [briefly describe the situation], some polling places have been [closed, relocated]. To avoid any inconvenience on Election Day, please visit our online voter information portal or call [Phone Number] to confirm your polling place. Your participation is crucial to our democratic process. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation! #Election2024 #VoteSafe• Polling Place Changes: Some polling places have been relocated due to facility issues. To find your updated polling place, please check our voter information portal or call [Phone Number]. Your vote is vital, and we want to ensure a smooth voting experience for everyone. #Vote2024 #ElectionUpdate• Election Update: Please be aware that some polling places may have changed due to [briefly describe the situation]. To confirm your polling place, visit our website or call [Phone Number]. Your engagement in this election is greatly appreciated, and we are here to support you in making sure your vote counts! #ElectionDay #EveryVoteCounts

Accompanying Photography

It is important to accompany all social media posts with appropriate, eye-catching images. Feel free to use your own, locale-specific photography, or make use of universal images to ensure you grab your reader's attention. You can access additional universal images and social media post templates at <https://bit.ly/PLEJ-PPCR-SM>.



Polling Place Closure Press Release Template



This generic press release template is a starting point to help you address polling place closures and provide guidance to voters that is customizable for your jurisdiction. The **Blue text** notes places where jurisdiction specific text is particularly important. It's a best practice to keep press releases to one page or two at most.

CONTACT

[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[County Elections Office]
[Phone Number]
[Email Address]
[Date]



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polling Place Closures and Relocations Due to [Reason]

[City, State] - [Date] - Due to [reason, such as severe weather, facility availability, etc.], several polling places in [County/City] have been closed or relocated. The [County Elections Office] is committed to ensuring that all voters are informed and able to cast their ballots safely and efficiently.

If one change:

Voters who typically vote at [old voting location] should plan to vote at [new voting location] instead. Our website is already updated to reflect this change.

If multiple changes:

Below is a list of polling place changes for the [name of election], and our website has been updated to reflect these changes:

Precinct #	Old Voting Location	Current Voting Location	Reason for Change
001.0	123 Maple Street Appletown, XY 12345	456 Apple Blvd Appletown, XY 12345	Temporary Change (not available this cycle due to construction)
147.1	741 Green Street Greenville, XY 12346	297 Oak Lane Greenville, XY 12348	Permanent Change (additional square footage and accessibility)

Sample Statement:

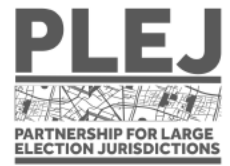
Generic

"Our priority is to ensure that every eligible voter can participate in the election process without undue burden," said [Chief Election Official's Name], [Title]. "We are working diligently to provide alternative voting locations and keep the public informed. Your vote is important, and we are here to support you every step of the way."

Emergency Changes (Natural Disaster)

"We extend our sympathy to everyone in our town affected by the [Issue]. Our priority is to ensure that every eligible voter can participate in the election process without undue burden, despite this unexpected event" said [Chief Election Official's Name]

Polling Place Closure Press Release Template



This generic press release template is a starting point to help you address polling place closures and provide guidance to voters that is customizable for your jurisdiction. The **Blue text** notes places where jurisdiction specific text is particularly important. It's a best practice to keep press releases to one page or two at most.

[Name], [Title]. "We are working diligently to provide alternative voting locations and keep the public informed. Your vote is important, and we are here to support you every step of the way."

Immediate Steps for Voters:

1. Check Your Polling Place:

- Visit our online voter information portal at [Website URL] for the latest voting information.
- Call our office at [Phone Number] for assistance.
- [Insert other applicable ways of communication, webchat, texting service, etc]

2. Alternative Polling Locations: *(if applicable)*

- We have established alternative voting locations at the following sites:
 - [Location 1: Address]
 - [Location 2: Address]
 - [Location 3: Address]
- These locations are fully equipped and accessible.

3. Stay Informed:

- Follow our social media channels for real-time updates:
 - [X (Twitter) URL]
 - [Facebook URL]
 - [Instagram URL]
- Local media and digital newsrooms will also be providing updates throughout the day.

Ensuring Voter Safety and Accessibility

We understand the inconvenience caused by this change in voting location, and we are doing everything possible to minimize disruption. We will provide clear signage and extra staff at the original and new polling locations to guide voters. All voting locations are accessible and compliant with ADA requirements.

Transportation Assistance

For voters who may face difficulties reaching the new voting locations, we are offering transportation assistance. Please contact our office at [Phone Number] to arrange for a ride.

Continued Support

Our voter hotline at [Phone Number] is available during [hours] for any questions or concerns. Our staff is ready to assist you in finding your correct voting location and ensuring you can vote.

About [County Elections Office]

The [County Elections Office] is dedicated to conducting fair, accurate, and transparent elections. We are committed to ensuring that every eligible voter has the opportunity to participate in the voting process. For further information, please visit [Website URL] or contact us at [Phone Number].

[County Elections Office]

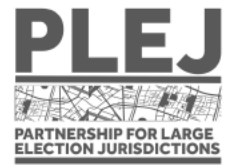
[Address]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

[Website URL]

Polling Place Closure Voter-Facing Notification Template



Here is an example of a generic, *conversational* resource on steps a voter impacted by a polling place change may take, with actionable steps to take before heading to the polls. **Blue text** denotes places where jurisdiction specific information is particularly important, though the entire resource is customizable for your jurisdiction.



Voter Guide on Navigating Polling Place Closures and Relocations

Greetings Voter,

Have you been recently impacted by a change to your voting location? Not to worry, sometimes voting locations become unavailable (temporarily or permanently) due to facility availability, construction, severe weather, or other reasons. We have you covered: below is a short list of things you should do before heading to the polls to ensure a smooth voting experience.

Steps to Take Before You Vote

- 1. Check Your Polling Place:**
 - Visit our online voter information portal at [\[Website URL\]](#) for the latest voting information.
 - Call our office at [\[Phone Number\]](#) for assistance.
 - [\[Insert other ways of communication, webchat, texting service, etc\]](#)
- 2. Alternative Polling Locations: *(if applicable)***
 - We've setup alternative voting location(s) to make voting easier for you:
 - [\[Location 1: Address\]](#)
 - [\[Location 2: Address\]](#)
 - [\[Location 3: Address\]](#)
 - These new spots are ready for you and fully accessible.
- 3. Stay In the Loop:**
 - Keep yourself informed with real-time updates through our various channels:
 - [\[X \(Twitter\) URL\]](#)
 - [\[Facebook URL\]](#)
 - [\[Instagram URL\]](#)
 - Local media and digital news rooms will also be providing updates throughout the day.

Your Safety and Accessibility Are Our Priority

We know this change might be inconvenient, but we're doing everything we can to make it easier for you. Look for extra signs and staff at both the original and new polling places to help guide you. All locations are accessible and ADA compliant.

Need a Ride? We've Got You Covered! *(if applicable)*

If getting to the new polling location is a challenge, let us help. Call us at [\[Phone Number\]](#), and we can arrange transportation for you.

We're Here to Help

Our voter hotline at [\[Phone Number\]](#) is open [\[hours\]](#) ready to answer any questions or address any concerns you might have. We're here to help you find your polling place and ensure you can vote. Other ways to connect with us:

[\[County Elections Office\]](#)
[\[Address\]](#)
[\[Phone Number\]](#)
[\[Email Address\]](#)
[\[Website URL\]](#)

After the Election

After Election Day, we'll review the future availability of all voting locations and update the voter information portal as needed so you know the voting location for a future election.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Last Revised: August 2024