

Hutchinson County Central Counting Station

TAC 81.36 (e)

Central Counting Station Personnel

CCS Manager – Kelly Ratliff
Presiding Judge – Jackie Ortiz
Alternate Presiding Judge – Tami Brown
Tabulation Supervisor – Jamie Jimenez
IT Clerk – Richard Hein
Clerk- Amanda Deschaines
Security – Deputy Homan

Purpose

To convene on election night where ballots are counted, vote totals are accumulated, and the unofficial election results are generated.

Procedures for Convening the Central Counting Station

CCS will convene as follows:

- The Tabulation Supervisor will schedule and confirm a day for the Public Test (LAT test 1) and publish notice on the County Website. The Central Counting Personnel will be available and will assist in the conducting of the Public Test.
- Election Day ~ In the Room 211~ 1st Floor of the Hutchinson County Courthouse

Central Counting Staff will convene. No electronic or recording devices are permitted. (TEC 127.002, 127.007, 61.007)

Approved poll watchers are permitted

Administer oaths

Conduct statutory 2nd test

Scan and resolve mail-in ballots

Duplicate any damaged, spoiled, or otherwise unreadable paper ballots for scanning

Process electronic Early Voting Ballot Records from EV

Tabulate Early Voting results and release result reports electronically for distribution.

Receive, process and tabulate Election Day precinct results as they are delivered by the Precinct Presiding Judges

Tabulate election results and release unofficial results report

Adjourn CCS

- **Reconvene**

The Central Counting Station shall reconvene after the Ballot Board has completed its review of all Ballot by Mail ballots, FPCA ballots and provisional ballots for final tabulation and update reporting of unofficial results.

Unseal testing material for the third and then final 4th test. Then will report official results after canvass.

Administration of Oaths

- Oaths shall be administered according to the provisions in the Election Advisory and Election Code on the day of the Public Test and on Election Day, immediately after the Central Counting Station is convened:

- **Oath for use in Primary Elections, General Election for State and County Officers, 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 correctly reflect the voter's intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present and will work only 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 Affiliation:**

"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 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."

Intake of ballots, electronic media and supplies

- All judges at Early Voting and Election Day shall sign the chain of custody documents to document the inventory control of equipment and votes. All verification must be performed with two or more individuals.
- The County Clerk's Office and the Ballot Board shall sign chain of custody review of the ballot by mail ballots.

TABULATION PROCEDURES:

The Presiding Judge of Central Counting, Manager and the Tabulation Supervisor will complete the 2nd Testing of the Tabulation Equipment.

Before any data from the media sticks are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the software and signed by the Judge, Manager, and Tabulation Supervisor.

The Judge & Alternate will verify seals and Serial numbers on all scanners & will be checked against the Seal Log for the Early Voting tabulation.

After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, results will be saved to a media stick and read into the EMS Software. Ballots by mail will be placed in a sealed ballot box.

Early Voting Results will be released when the polls close at 7:00 or upon the last voter casting a ballot at the polls. The County Clerk/CCS Manager will notify the CCS if there are voters in line at 7:00.

Duplication of Ballots

- The Ballot Board shall perform the duplication of ballots
- A team of at least two people shall duplicate any ballot that is damaged to the extent it cannot be automatically counted, and the ballot may be duplicated so it can be automatically counted.
- Each duplicate ballot must be clearly labeled "Duplicate" and must bear the serial number of the original ballot.

- The duplicate shall be substituted for the original ballot in the ballots prepared for automatic counting. The original shall be preserved with the other voted ballots for the same period.
- Central Counting staff (Manager and Presiding Judge) will follow the same procedure should a ballot need to be duplicated in case of necessity.

Resolving Voter Intent

- The Central Counting Manager shall confer with the Presiding Judge, and they will agree on the process for resolving voter intent.

Write-In Votes

The approved list of Write-In Candidates prescribed by Section 141.031 is provided to Central Counting Station. Only Approved candidates are tabulated with the ballots.

Reconciliation

- Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from ES&S ExpressPoll Pollbooks, plus the ballot log, to the number of ballots cast from the DS200 results tape.
- 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. (87.021, 87.1221)
- Election Day – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from ES&S ExpressPoll Pollbooks, plus the ballot logs, to the number of ballots cast from the DS200 results tape. (127.007(b))

Printing of Precinct Returns and Election Totals

- Early Voting and Ballot by Mail ballots shall be read into the EMS by the Tabulation Supervisor on Election Day after the completion of the 2nd L & A test. All Early Voting and Ballot by Mail ballots collected at that time shall be tabulated and a report generated by the Tabulation Supervisor and Judge.

- The report shall be reviewed for accuracy by the Tabulation Supervisor and then by the Presiding and Alternate Judges and initialed by the Tabulation Supervisor and Presiding and Alternate judges.
- After approval by the Tabulation Supervisor, Presiding and Alternate Judges, the election returns shall be sent as “unofficial” to the County Clerk/CCS Manager who shall determine when to release the initial results.
- Periodic reporting of election returns shall be posted as determined by the County Clerk until all precincts have returned their results.
- Results shall be posted to the SOS by the County Clerk/CCS Manager as they become available.

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.”
- The poll watcher must deliver their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the CCS and the Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate.
- The poll watcher must disable all recording devices upon entering the Central Counting Station.

Delivery of Materials to the General Custodian of Election Records

- The County Clerk/CCS Manager and her representative shall oversee the sealing of all documents to be stored for the statutorily required timeframe.
- The Central Counting Station is responsible for the archival of electronic election records in accordance with State law and the prescribed best practices from the system vendor(s).

General Flow of events

- i. Swearing in / Oath
 - Presiding Judge administers the Oaths.
- ii. Second Test
 - Verify that the testing materials are sealed/secured as left from the Public Test
 - Ask the Tabulations Supervisor to run a zero report before beginning the test
 - Unseal the testing materials and the tabulations supervisor will re-run the test deck of ballots, and the results media stick from the L&A test.
 - Review the results report from the system – the results should match the Public Test exactly. If yes, the second test is successful.
 - Testing Materials must be sealed and placed back in the secure box.
- iii. Unseal early voting results, and tabulate
 - CCS Manager & Tabulating Supervisor verify the seal numbers match to the paperwork and complete the chain-of-custody docs.
 - Once the Early Voting DS200 tabulators are unsealed, no one may discuss the process, trends or results with any staff outside of the Central Counting Station. Electronic communications are forbidden, and may result in dismissal from the CCS.
 - Tabulations supervisor receives the media sticks from each polling site. Manager verifies the ballots cast count for each polling location matches paperwork from that polling location and relays any discrepancies in the count to the presiding judge for review and decision.
 - When all precincts are tabulated, the managers review the final report for correctness, formatting, title, etc.
- iv. At 7:00 release early voting results report
 - The tabulation supervisor generates two different reports:
 - The Precinct-by-Precinct results report (TEC 65.014, 127.131)
 - the Election Summary report (TEC 66.056, 127.131)
 - the Unofficial Reconciliation Form is completed & signed by the Presiding Judge (TEC 127.131(f))
 - The tabulation supervisor places the results on the county website

- v. Upon arrival of the election day precinct clear bags:
- The central counting alternate presiding judge and clerk receives the bags and handles the chain-of-custody procedures from the precinct presiding judge.
 - The manager assists the judge and brings the electronic media and the paperwork envelope into the CCS.
 - Tabulations supervisor receives the media sticks from each polling site. Manager verifies the ballots cast count for each polling site matches paperwork from that site and relays any discrepancies in the count to the presiding judge for review and decision.
 - As precincts are tabulated, the tabulations supervisor will provide electronic precinct-by-precinct reports to be released.
- vi. When all precincts are tabulated, the manager reviews the results reports for correctness, formatting, and title before they're released to the IT Clerk for publication.
- vii. Conclusion –
- Conduct the 3rd test, then reseal the testing material and label it
 - Organize the election results documents. Separate stacks for Early Voting and Election Day. Secure in the office/vault.