

Are You Ready to Audit?

Checklist for Tabulation Audits

Post-election risk-limiting audits (RLAs) can increase voter confidence in the tabulation of election results. The right election processes can prepare your jurisdiction for this important step in safeguarding elections.

1) Do you have voter-verified paper ballots or paper records?

RLAs depend on people (auditors) holding and looking at paper evidence that has been created and examined by people (voters). In an RLA, auditors inspect some of the cast ballots to determine if the outcomes reported in machine-tabulated totals are supported by the paper evidence that has been verified by individual voters. For an audit to be trustworthy, it must involve examining paper ballots cast by the voter or voter-verified paper records. Direct recording electronic voting machines (DREs) provide nothing to audit, and software-generated ballot images cannot provide trustworthy audit evidence because they can be manipulated after votes are cast.

2) Do you have ballot storage and handling procedures that enable reliable ballot retrieval?

RLAs require finding particular ballots selected randomly for auditing. Keeping reliable records of how and where ballots are stored and developing ways to find ballots by their position within a batch make it easier to retrieve specific, individual ballots selected for auditing. When multiple ballot styles are used, sorting and storing ballots by style can reduce the number of ballots needed to audit. Where possible and permissible by law, printing an identifier onto ballots as they are scanned can also make ballot retrieval quicker, though this is not a requirement for audits.

3) Are you using all the technology capability your voting machines allow?

Many modern voting systems can produce cast vote records (CVRs) that indicate how the machine interpreted each ballot it scanned. RLAs that use CVRs in the audit process can make the audit more efficient, allowing fewer ballots to be examined to reach an acceptable level of assurance. However, it is feasible to conduct RLAs without CVRs, often still with a relatively small number of ballots.
