

Why Do a Tabulation Audit?

Because we can't correct errors unless we know they happened.

Auditing can catch errors missed by other tests. Logic and accuracy tests ensure machines are ready for election day. But without periodically checking the final tabulations, intentional or accidental errors that occur after initial testing can go unnoticed.

Auditing provides a recovery plan for the vote count. We can't prevent natural disasters, power outages, or other circumstances from interrupting the election process, but we can plan for them. We also can't prevent every hacking attempt or potential technology failure. It's important to be prepared for an incident that could impact the vote tabulation. By preserving and then auditing voter-verified ballots, errors can be detected and corrected in a timely manner.

Auditing builds voter confidence. With increased scrutiny and allegations of interference, voters now more than ever need reassurance that elections are secure. By routinely performing tabulation audits, we ensure quality control in the tabulation process. Audits that check samples of voter-verified ballots give voters assurance their ballots count.

Why Do a Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA)?

Because RLAs strategically allocate resources while providing measurable assurance in contest outcomes.

RLAs avoid checking ballots unnecessarily. Unlike audits that check a fixed percentage of all ballots, risk-limiting audits base the number of ballots selected for audit on the specifics of the contest. Contests with a wide margin can be audited with very few ballots, freeing up resources for auditing closer contests. Even in close contests, risk-limiting audits can often provide confidence in correct outcomes with a modest amount of effort.

RLAs are statistically sound. The American Statistical Association endorses and recommends risk-limiting audits. By using truly random samples of ballots, these audits are able to give measurable assurance in the entire outcome of a contest from a relatively small number of ballots. When the procedures of a risk-limiting audit are followed, there is only a limited chance that an incorrectly reported outcome could go undetected and uncorrected.

RLAs are flexible. There are different types of risk-limiting audits, all of which provide statistical accuracy and efficiency. RLAs can adapt to various kinds of voting systems, provided there are voter-verified ballots to audit. The level of assurance given by the audit is also flexible. When greater assurance is needed, more ballots can be checked.

For more information, contact audit@verifiedvoting.org

