



Minnesota Elections Administration Manual Mail Elections

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Introduction

Mail Elections Overview

Mail elections are one-time special elections conducted entirely by mail to decide ballot questions. They are authorized under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#) and expire once the election is complete. Generally, no offices may be on the ballot, except in overlapping school and municipal jurisdictions where a question is also on the ballot. All standard election laws apply unless noted otherwise ([Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#)).

Note: Mail elections are **not** the same as mail ballot precincts. Mail ballot precincts are permanent precincts where all voters cast their ballots by mail in every election (federal, state, county, city, or town). These are governed under [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#) and are described in the [Mail Ballot Precinct Manual](#).

Acronyms Used in This Guide

For quick reference, this guide uses several common election-related acronyms.

AB – Absentee Ballot
COA – Change of Address
DVS – Department of Vehicle Services
EDR – Election Day Registration
GIS – Geographic Information System
HCF – Health Care Facility
MB – Mail Ballot
NCOA – National Change of Address
OSS – Office of the Secretary of State
PVC – Postal Verification Card
SAH – Safe at Home
SSA – Social Security Administration
SVRS – Statewide Voter Registration System
UOCAVA – Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act

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Mail Elections Calendar

This calendar highlights key dates specific to mail elections. Other election types may involve additional deadlines not included here. For a complete set of election calendars, please refer to the [OSS's Election Calendars](#).

84 days before election – Authorization deadline

Last day for governing body to authorize a special mail election by resolution; expires after election. Authorizing body pays costs (postage, envelopes, printing, instructions, mailing labels; other costs per statute). [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subps. 1, 2, 9, 12](#).

84 days before election – Cancellation deadline

Last day for municipal body or school board to cancel a mail election. There are no provisions in election laws for a county board to cancel a special election for a question. Clerk notifies county; county notifies OSS (email to elections.dept@state.mn.us). [Minn. Stat. 205.10, subd. 6](#); [205.16, subds. 4–5](#); [205A.05, subds. 3–3b](#); [205A.07, subd. 3](#).

84 days before election – Mail election notices

Clerk notifies county at least 84 days prior; county sets up mail election in SVRS and notifies OSS. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [205.16, subds. 4–5](#). More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

74 days before election – School district notice to Commissioner of Education

Clerk provides written notice to Commissioner for financial-related question special elections or cancellations. [Minn. Stat. 123B.62](#); [123B.63](#); [126C.17](#); [126C.69](#); [475.58](#); [205A.07, subd. 3a](#).

46 days before election – Mail election ballot envelope labels

Mail Election Ballot Envelope Labels

Counties, municipalities, or school districts holding special mail elections may use SVRS to track mail ballots, though most stand-alone local elections do not. Non-bar-coded labels can be generated from SVRS (Mail Ballot report → Mail Ballot Labels for Local Elections, PDF or Excel).

Envelopes and Instructions

Gather all envelopes and copy instructions—enough for initial, subsequent, and replacement mailings. Confirm postage arrangements (stamps, meter, mailing service, etc.). If using a vendor for the first mailing, follow their instructions for how they want your data (usually a single district-wide .txt file).

[Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 4](#)

46 days before election – UOCAVA ballots

By 46 days, county sends ballots to voters with active applications in SVRS. If county not administering, the ballot must be provided promptly to auditor. [Minn. Stat. 203B.22](#).

46 to 14 days before election – Mail ballots to registered voters

Jurisdiction mails ballots: 46–14 days before regular elections. Include secrecy envelope, instructions (with phone/email contact), and return envelope with postage. Ballots cannot be mailed to challenged voters or those with incomplete registrations; required notices must be sent. Vendor file formats may apply. [Minn. Stat. 203B.11](#); [203B.46](#). More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

46 to 1 day before election – Safe at Home ballots

SAH office obtains and transmits ballots; identifying info removed; ballots reviewed by ballot board. Accepted ballots marked “SAH” and counted like ABs. [Minn. Stat. 5B.06](#); [203B.121](#)

46 days before through Election Day – Ballot boards

Governing body establishes board by ordinance/resolution. Members: election judges or deputies trained in AB/MB processing. Two members review return envelopes, accept/reject, and handle replacements. Records kept in SVRS or logs; rosters marked MB/AB. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#); [204C.13, subd. 6](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#)
More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

46 days before through Election Day – Post office returns, reg changes, spoiled ballots

Maintain records of undeliverable ballots; may reissue in certain circumstances. New reg apps after ballot mailed = spoil original, notify voter. Issue replacements for lost or spoiled ballots; track in SVRS or log. [Minn. Stat. 201.12](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#) **More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.**

42 days before election – Notice of special mail ballot procedures

Post at least 6 weeks before election; must include jurisdiction, election date, mailing date, return info, EDR/absentee instructions, counting details, contact info. Options to publish or mail in addition to posting. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 3](#)

35 to 1 day before election – Health care facility outreach voting

Conducted in mail elections. Assists residents with mail ballots and non-registered ABs. [Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 2](#)

30 to 15 days before election – School district referendum notice to taxpayers

Board mails referendum revenue notice 15–30 days before election to property owners (via county tax/GIS). [Minn. Stat. 126C.17, subd. 9\(b\)](#)

21 days before election – Pre-registration deadline & subsequent mailings

By 21 days: voters may preregister. Mail ballots sent to preregistered; subsequent mailing at least 14 days before election for new regs. Others may apply for AB. [Minn. Stat. 201.061](#); [204B.46](#)
More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

18 days to 1 day before the election – Direct Balloting (if available)

Registered mail voters may spoil ballot and apply for AB to place directly into tabulator. Deadline: 5 p.m. day before election. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subd. 3](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 4](#)

18 days before through 1 day after election – Processing accepted AB/MB ballots

From 18 days: accepted ballots may be opened, duplicated, initialed, deposited. Replacement ballots mailed if rejected more than 5 days before election; within 5 days, attempt voter contact. Results not public until polls close. Counting open to public. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subd. 3](#); [203B.121, subd. 3](#)
More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

14 days before election – Notice of election & notice to voters

Clerk publishes 2-week notice (return info, offices/questions) and Notice to Voters. Certain cities/towns may post instead. Must also post sample ballots. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subds. 1–3](#); [205A.07, subd. 1](#); [204D.16](#)

10 days before election – Posting notice of election

Municipal clerks (if not published) and school districts post notices in offices. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#); [205A.07, subd. 1](#)

7 days before election – Agent delivery of ballots

During the 7 days before election, eligible voter may designate agent to deliver/return AB by 8 p.m. election day. Original mail ballot spoiled; new AB record created. [Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 4](#)

4 days before election – School district posts sample ballot

Clerk posts in admin office for public inspection. [Minn. Stat. 205A.07, subd. 2](#)

Saturday before election – Absentee voting hours

Auditor/municipal clerk open Sat 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; voters may vote mail ballots. School districts exempt. [Minn. Stat. 203B.085, subd. 2](#)

Day before election – Absentee voting hours (counties and municipalities)

County auditors and municipal clerks must be open for in-person absentee voting until 5 p.m. Voters may deliver mail ballots or cast absentee ballots in person. [Minn. Stat. 203B.085, subd. 1](#)

Election Day – Return of voted ballots

Ballots due by 8 p.m.; board reviews acceptance. Polling location = election office; must provide stations, drop box, judges, public access. Eligible unregistered voters may still apply for AB. Tabulator use allowed. No results until 8 p.m. [Minn. Stat. 204B.45, subds. 2–2a](#); [Minn. R. 8210.2200](#); [8210.3000](#).

More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

24 hours after election – Completion of AB counts

By 24 hrs post-election, board verifies late ABs against roster; if no in-person vote, add to totals. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 5\(c\)](#)

6 weeks after election – Posting history

Within 6 weeks, county auditor posts voting history; enter EDRs; process PVCs. Returned PVCs with no proof → county attorney. Late/rejected ballots count toward registration but not history. [Minn. Stat. 201.121](#); [201.171](#).

More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

6 to 10 weeks after election – Notice of rejected AB

Official mails written notice of rejection to AB voters (not primaries/special primaries) if they did not otherwise vote. Mail ballots to registered residential addresses are not ABs. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 2\(3\)](#).

More information available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

Authorization

Authorization for Mail Elections for Questions

Authorization to conduct a special mail election for questions, pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), expires after the election is completed. A county, municipality, or school district may conduct a special election on a ballot question entirely by mail. No offices may be voted on at a mail election under this provision.

Authorization must be granted by resolution of the municipal governing body, school board, or county board. The resolution must be adopted at least 84 days prior to the election. This resolution applies only to the single mail election for which it is adopted.

The jurisdiction must notify the county auditor of the special mail election at least 84 days before the election. This satisfies the notice requirement under [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 3](#). The county auditor must then notify the Office of the Secretary of State at least 84 days prior to the election.

Notice of the election and the special mail voting procedures must also be posted at least six weeks before the election.

All election administration for the special mail election must follow the procedures outlined in this manual and applicable laws.

Entering the Special Mail Election into SVRS

To notify the OSS of the special election, the county auditor (or home county auditor if jurisdiction crosses counties) must set up the special election in SVRS.

Adding a Mail Election Poll Location

1. Find Polling Places under Precincts and Polling Places in SVRS.
2. Choose Mail Election under Polling Place Type.
3. Conduct a search. Press the “Add” button if the needed location is not available.

Setting up a Special Mail Election

Once the mail election polling place location has been entered, enter the special election into the SVRS election schedule. If multiple counties are in the jurisdiction, the home county adds the election into SVRS.

Please review the SVRS user documentation about adding a special election into SVRS.

Upon submission, OSS has received the required notice of election. The OSS must mark the election “active” before it is available to all counties for further work.

Once the election is activated at OSS, active UOCAVA absentee ballots will be initialized, and the Safe at Home program will be notified. Do not mark the rosters ready to build until after pre-registration is closed and all voter registration-related data is entered and queued records are processed. ([Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 2](#))

Costs

The governing body authorizing the mail election shall pay the costs of the mailing. Costs of mailing include postage costs, and the costs of printing required envelopes, instructions, affidavits, and mailing labels. Other expenses must be paid as provided in [Minn. Stat. 204B.32](#).

Notice of Ballot Procedures to Voters for Mail Election Voting

Notice of the election and the special mail procedures must be given at least six weeks for mail elections prior to the election. This is done by posting the information as to:

- The name or description of the municipality or unorganized territory.
- The date of the election and the dates that ballots will be mailed.
- A statement that each voter registered on or before the 21st day before the election will be mailed a ballot.
- The times, places and manner in which voted ballots can be returned.
- An explanation of how an eligible voter who is not registered may apply for a ballot and how a registered voter who will be absent from the precinct may apply to receive the ballot at a temporary address.
- The place and time for counting of ballots.
- The name and address or telephone number of the official or office where additional information can be obtained.

Mailing Ballots

When Ballots Are Sent

Ballots in a special mail election must be sent to each registered voter no more than 46 days and no later than 14 days before the election.

A subsequent mailing must be sent no later than 14 days before the election to voters who registered after the initial mailing but before the pre-registration cutoff (21 days before the election).

Some jurisdictions choose to send only one mailing between the 21st and 14th day before the election, as permitted by law. This is a local decision based on administrative preference and timing. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#)

Challenged, See ID, or Incomplete Voters

Voters who are “challenged,” or have “See ID” or whose registration is incomplete are not sent ballots. They are to receive a notice and must apply for an absentee ballot. When an absentee ballot (AB) application is received from a challenged voter or a voter with incomplete registration, they should be treated in the same manner as challenged absentee voters and be sent the ballot along with non-registered absentee ballot materials. [Minn. R. 8210.0225](#)

Permanent Absentee Voters

In a special mail election conducted under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), all registered voters must be sent a mail ballot to their residential address. This includes voters with permanent absentee status.

A separate absentee ballot should not be issued to permanent absentee voters for a mail election. If a voter with permanent absentee status needs their ballot sent to an alternate address, they must submit an absentee ballot application.

If such a request is received, election staff should ensure that the application is processed and recorded in the voter's SVRS record so the ballot is mailed to the correct location and a permanent absentee ballot is not mailed for that election.

Health Care Facility

When an election is conducted entirely by mail under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), voters in health care facilities must still be provided full access to absentee voting. This includes conducting an in-person health care facility (HCF) team visit, as required by [Minn. Stat. 203B.11](#).

Registered voters at HCFs should automatically receive a mail ballot at their registered address. These ballots may be used during the HCF team visit, provided the voter still resides at that location and the ballot is blank.

If a voter has received a mail ballot but spoils it, a new ballot may be issued according to [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#).

Unregistered or inactive voters at HCFs must be given the opportunity to register and vote using a non-registered absentee ballot. Election officials must:

- Coordinate with facility staff to identify residents who are not registered.
- Provide absentee ballot applications under [Minn. Stat. 203B.06](#).
- Issue non-registered absentee ballot packets including a voter registration application.
- Ensure ballots and registration forms are returned together for processing as required by [Minn. Stat. 203B.07](#).

Note: A health care facility absentee voting team visit is required for all elections, including mail elections.

Printing Mail Ballot Labels

Printing When SVRS Mail Ballot Modules Are Used

All voter registration additions and updates (paper and online) are to be complete before adding mail election ballot records using SVRS.

When the SVRS mail ballot modules are used, mail ballot records are added and labels initialized and printed by completing the following steps.

County Sends Initial Mailing

If the initial mailing is being completed by the county, it is strongly recommended to print the labels by precinct or school district combined polling place. If printed jurisdiction-wide, the names will appear on the labels in alphabetical order, not in precinct order.

Note: If you are working with a vendor to send out your first batches of mail election ballots, please ask for and follow their instructions carefully. Their process may be very different from the process we have in place for those who send out their own ballots from the election offices.

Vendor Sending Initial Mailing

1. Use the Mail Ballot Labels Avery report to create a mail election ballot voter file for the vendor.
2. Set the report parameters as the vendor instructs.
3. If they want the entire jurisdiction in one file, schedule the report.
4. The report will be created overnight, then found under Reports > Saved Reports.
5. In Absentee Ballot > AB Labels Batches, select the batch and click “Create File for Batch.”
6. Save the .txt file to your computer and provide it to the vendor as instructed.

Reprinting Mail Ballot Labels When SVRS Mail Ballot Modules Are Used

If you need to reprint a batch of mail election ballot labels after you have printed the initial batch, go to Absentee Ballot > AB Label Batches. Choose the Election and then press “Search.” A list of label batches that have been printed will show up. Choose “Reprint Labels for Batch” and a .pdf of the labels will be generated.

Printing Mail Ballot Labels When SVRS Mail Ballot Modules Are Not Used

When the SVRS Mail Ballot Modules are not being used, jurisdictions with SVRS access can print labels for mail voters by running either the Mail Ballot Labels for Local Elections (.pdf) or Mail Ballot Labels for Local Elections for Excel reports found in SVRS Reports.

Alternatively, electronic media with either a PDF (formatted to be printed onto standard Avery 5160 mailing labels) or data file containing the names of registered voters in an election jurisdiction conducting mail balloting or a mail election may be provided by the county auditor.

If the municipality or school district crosses counties, it is recommended that the information be ordered through the OSS. More information about ordering can be found at the Registered Voter List Requests webpage.

Mail Ballot Mailing Materials

- Instructions for marking and returning mail ballots (Helpful Links section)
- Transmittal envelope (Appendix B).
- Postage-paid return mailing envelope (Appendix C).
- Signature/certification envelope (Helpful Links section).
- Ballot secrecy envelope.

The transmittal envelope (outgoing mailing envelope) is used to mail the unvoted ballot packets to the voter. Many jurisdictions use the same type of “outgoing” envelope for mail ballots that they use for absentee ballots. A phone number and e-mail address of the jurisdiction mailing the ballot packet is to be included with return address information. An example is found in Appendix D.

The envelope used for mailing back a voted ballot must have postage affixed.

Nonregistered Voters

An eligible voter who was not registered 21 days prior to the election, or whose registration is challenged or incomplete, may apply for and receive an absentee ballot. In mail elections conducted under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), absentee voting must follow the procedures in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 203B, except that the deadlines to apply for, receive, and return an absentee ballot are extended until 8:00 p.m. on election day.

Election officials must send absentee voters the following materials:

- A voter registration application.
- A ballot secrecy envelope.
- A return signature envelope for nonregistered absentee voters.
- A postage-paid and addressed return mailing envelope.
- Instructions for marking and returning absentee ballots, along with the ballots themselves.

The most recent versions of the absentee ballot application, instructions, and signature envelope for nonregistered voters can be found in the helpful links section of this manual.

All accepted absentee and mail ballots are processed by the ballot board and counted together as one vote total. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#)

Updating Voter Information During the Mailing Period

Once ballots have been mailed for a mail election under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), election offices may receive updated voter registration information for those who reside in the mail election jurisdiction.

Updates may be received from:

- Paper or online voter registration applications
- Department of Vehicle Services (DVS)
- National Change of Address (NCOA) or in-state COA data
- Department of Health or SSA records

If a voter's registration is updated after a ballot has been sent, that ballot must be marked as spoiled in SVRS or on the spreadsheet/log, and a new ballot may be issued as appropriate.

Important: If the county is not administering the mail election, they must have a secure and prompt communication system to inform the local administrator of mail election ballot changes. If SVRS is not used, track ballot changes on the local administrator's spreadsheet or log.

The following outlines what to do depending on the voter's updated registration situation.

Handling Voter Registration Updates After Ballots Are Sent

If the voter remains in the same county and in the mail election jurisdiction

Before pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter's address in SVRS.
- Mark the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Add and issue a replacement ballot.
- Correct the address in the ballot record.
- Print replacement ballot labels and issue the ballot.
- Mark envelope as Replacement Ballot (include notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted).

After pre-registration deadline

- Update the address in the voter record and pend as Late Registration.
- If SVRS is used, a system warning will appear: "This voter has the following Active AB/MB record."
- Send SVRS late notice (includes text that previous ballot cannot be voted/counted).
- Mark the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.

If the voter remains in the same county but moved out of the mail election jurisdiction

Before pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter's address in SVRS and send a postal verification card (PVC).
- Mark the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.
- Send a voter notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.

After pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter's address and pend as Late Registration.
- If the new address is in a jurisdiction with an election at the same time, pend as Late Registration.
- If the new address is outside such a jurisdiction, update the registration and send notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.
- Mark the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.

If the voter moves to a different county but remains in a mail election jurisdiction

Before pre-registration deadline

- The new county updates the voter record and moves the voter into their county.
- The new county notifies the previous county of the moved voter.
- The new county adds a new mail ballot record and issues a ballot.
- Mark envelope as Replacement Ballot (include notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted).
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by using the Absentee and Mail Ballot Issues for Future Elections report in SVRS.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.
- If ballot already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.

After pre-registration deadline

- The new county updates the voter record and pends as Late Registration.
- The new county sends SVRS late notice (includes text that previous ballot cannot be voted/counted, and non-registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot).
- The new county notifies the previous county of the moved voter.
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by using the Absentee and Mail Ballot Issues for Future Elections report.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.
- If ballot already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.

If the voter moves to a different county and moved out of the mail election jurisdiction

Before pre-registration deadline

- The new county updates the voter record with the new address.
- The new county notifies the previous county of the moved voter and sends notice (not produced in SVRS) that the original ballot cannot be counted.
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by using the Absentee and Mail Ballot Issues for Future Elections report.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.
- If ballot already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.

After pre-registration deadline

- The new county updates the voter record.
- If the new address is within a jurisdiction with an election at the same time, pend as Late Registration.
- If the new address is outside such a jurisdiction, update registration and send notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.
- The new county notifies the previous county of the moved voter.
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by using the Absentee and Mail Ballot Issues for Future Elections report.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as "spoiled."
- Change the ballot record status to inactive.
- If ballot already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted/counted.

Undeliverable Ballots

In a mail election conducted under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), ballots must be sent by nonforwardable mail. If a ballot is returned by the post office as undeliverable, it must be securely retained and processed as outlined below.

Returned mail ballots must be marked as undeliverable in SVRS. If SVRS is not used, jurisdictions must maintain clear manual logs or spreadsheets documenting each step.

Important: If the county is not administering the mail election, they must have a secure and prompt communication system to inform the local administrator of mail election ballot changes. If SVRS is not used, track ballot changes on the local administrator's spreadsheet or log.

Note: In SVRS, the "Received Via" designation may display as "Mail Ballot Precinct" for internal tracking purposes. This does not indicate that the voter resides in a precinct governed by [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#), but that the voter was issued a mail ballot under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#).

Undeliverable Ballot Scenarios

If the post office indicates “Temporarily Away”

- Verify that the voter continues to reside at the location.
- Send a letter to the listed address explaining that they must apply for an absentee ballot if they wish to have a ballot sent to a different address.
- Provide information about online absentee ballot applications.

If there is a typo in the address

- Correct the voter record address.
- Correct the mail ballot record address.
- Reprint ballot labels and reissue the ballot.

If the voter remains in the same county and in the mail election jurisdiction

Before the pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter’s address in the voter record to the new address from the USPS label.
- Mark the initially-issued ballot as spoiled.
- Add and issue a replacement ballot.
- Correct the address in the mail ballot record.
- Print replacement ballot labels and issue the ballot.
- Mark the envelope as Replacement Ballot and include notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

After the pre-registration deadline

- Update the address in the voter record and pend as Late Registration.
- If SVRS is used, a system warning will appear: “This voter has the following Active AB/MB records.”
- Send SVRS late notice (includes text that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted; non-registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot).
- Mark initially issued ballot as spoiled.
- Change the record status to inactive.

If the voter remains in the same county but moved out of the mail election jurisdiction

Before the pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter’s record to the new address and send a postal verification card (PVC).
- Mark the initially issued ballot as spoiled and change the record status to inactive.
- Send the voter a notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

After the pre-registration deadline

- Update the voter's record to the new address.
- If the voter resides in a jurisdiction with an election at the same time: pend as Late Registration and send SVRS late notice (includes text that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted).
- If the voter resides outside such a jurisdiction: update the registration and send notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.
- Mark the initially issued ballot as spoiled and change the record status to inactive.

If the voter moves to a different county but remains in a mail election jurisdiction

Before the pre-registration deadline

- Transmit a copy of the returned envelope to the new county.
- The new county updates the voter record, moves the voter into their county, adds a new mail ballot record, and issues a ballot.
- Mark as Replacement in SVRS and mark the envelope as Replacement Ballot with notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by using the Absentee and Mail Ballot Issues for Future Elections report.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as spoiled and changes the record status to inactive.
- If the ballot was already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

After the pre-registration deadline

- Transmit a copy of the returned envelope to the new county.
- The new county updates the voter record and pends as Late Registration.
- The new county sends SVRS late notice (includes text that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted; non-registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot).
- The previous county is notified by the new county or by the report.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as spoiled and changes the record status to inactive.
- If the ballot was already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

If the voter moves to a different county and moved out of the mail election jurisdiction

Before the pre-registration deadline

- Transmit a copy of the returned envelope to the new county.
- The new county updates the voter record with the new address and notifies the previous county. The new county sends the voter a notice (not produced in SVRS) that the original ballot cannot be counted.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as spoiled and changes the record status to inactive.
- If the ballot was already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

After the pre-registration deadline

- Transmit a copy of the returned envelope to the new county.
- The new county updates the voter record.
- If the new address is in a jurisdiction with an election at the same time: pend as Late Registration and send SVRS late notice (includes text that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted).
- If the new address is outside such a jurisdiction: update the registration and send notice that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.
- The new county notifies the previous county.
- The previous county marks the initially issued ballot as spoiled and changes the record status to inactive.
- If the ballot was already sent, send notice (not produced in SVRS) that the previous ballot cannot be voted or counted.

If the forwarding address is a P.O. Box

Before the pre-registration deadline

Depending on county procedures, the county may:

- Send notice (not produced in SVRS) to the P.O. Box informing the voter of the returned ballot and enclose a voter registration application or instructions to register online.
- OR treat the case as if there were no forwarding address.
- If notice is sent, it must include information about laws governing the use of a P.O. Box in a voter registration record.

After the pre-registration deadline

- Send notice (not produced in SVRS) to the P.O. Box informing the voter of the returned ballot and how to apply for an absentee ballot.
- OR treat the case as if there were no forwarding address.
- If notice is sent, it must include information about laws governing the use of a P.O. Box in a voter registration record.

If the voter has moved out of state

- Mark the initially issued ballot as undeliverable.
- In the voter record, process a manual change of address (COA) and schedule the record to inactivate in 21 days.
- If the voter calls to cancel the COA inactivation (for example, the voter is still a Minnesota resident), the voter must apply for an absentee ballot to receive a ballot while out of state, since mail ballots are not forwardable.

If there is no forwarding address

- Change the voter record to Challenged status.
- Mark the initially issued ballot as undeliverable.
- Absentee ballots are forwardable. If the auditor, municipal clerk, or school district clerk can verify the voter's residence at that address (for example, correcting a typo), the ballot may be reissued.

Spoiled or Lost Ballots

In a special mail election conducted under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), a voter who has spoiled or lost their ballot may request a replacement ballot from the official conducting the election. The election official must maintain a record of all replacement ballots issued.

A written request or affidavit is not required, but election officials must take reasonable steps to verify that the individual requesting a replacement ballot is the voter themselves. No other person may request a replacement ballot on behalf of another voter.

Tracking Replacement Ballots

- **Without SVRS Mail Ballot Module:** Track spoiled or lost ballots and their replacements using a locally developed spreadsheet or log specific to the election.
- **With SVRS Mail Ballot Module:** The system will automatically maintain the log of replacement ballots.

These procedures are in accordance with [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#) and [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subps. 6 & 6a](#).

Returning Mail Ballots to Elections Office

Mail election ballots may be returned to the official conducting the election by mail, in person, or by designated agent. The official conducting the election must accept ballots returned in person or by designated agent until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Exception for 5:00 p.m. deadline

If a registered voter was sent a regular absentee ballot to an address other than their residential address, the voter or their agent must return the voted absentee ballot by 5:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Agent Delivery and Return of Mail Election Ballots

In certain circumstances, a voter may authorize another person (an agent) to pick up and return their absentee ballot.

- These are considered absentee ballots and not mail election ballots.
- An agent may return ballots for no more than three voters in a single election ([Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 4](#)).

Requirements for agent delivery

Election officials must:

- Verify that the voter qualifies for agent delivery.
- Ensure both the absentee ballot application and Agent Designation forms are completed and signed by the voter.
- Maintain a log that includes:
 - The agent's name and address
 - The name and address of each voter the agent is assisting
 - The agent's signature
- Require the agent to show identification that includes both their name and signature.

Receipt of Voted Ballots

The official receiving returned ballots must deliver them to the ballot board for processing.

- If a ballot is received more than 18 days before Election Day, the return envelope must be examined by the ballot board within five days.
- If a ballot is received within 18 days of Election Day, the return envelope must be examined within three days.
- Any ballots received before 8:00 p.m. on Election Day must be delivered to the ballot board within 24 hours of receipt.

Recording Receipt

- **Without SVRS:** Each mail ballot should be marked as received and the date manually recorded on a log or spreadsheet.
- **With SVRS:** If mail ballots are not presented to the ballot board daily, then ballots received each day must still be marked as “received” in SVRS. This ensures that voters using the online Voter Information Portal can see that their mail ballot has been received by the elections office and is awaiting ballot board review.

Ballot Board

The auditor or clerk must establish a ballot board to examine and accept or reject mail and absentee ballot return envelopes.

Composition of the Ballot Board

The board must consist of a sufficient number of election judges appointed as provided in [Minn. Stat. 204B.19 to 204B.22](#). Ballot board members are provided with adequate training on the processing and counting of absentee ballots, including but not limited to instruction on accepting and rejecting absentee ballots, storage of absentee ballots, timelines and deadlines, the role of the ballot board, procedures for opening absentee ballot envelopes, procedures for counting absentee ballots, and procedures for reporting absentee ballot totals. For county and city mail elections, the board may also include deputy auditors or deputy city clerks. Election judges serving on the ballot board must be from different political parties, unless the election is a town or school election not held in conjunction with a statewide election. ([Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#))

Review of Ballots

Two or more members of the ballot board examine each returned envelope and determine whether to accept or reject it, following the standards in [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#) and [Minn. R. 8210.2450](#). A ballot must be accepted if the voter is registered at the name and address listed on the signature envelope, the voter has signed the return envelope, and a witness has also signed the witness statement. Differences such as the use of nicknames, abbreviations, or initials are not reasons for rejection. The witness must be a U.S. citizen at least 18 years old on or before Election Day.

If the ballot board is not satisfied that these conditions are met, the envelope must be marked “Rejected,” signed or initialed, and returned to the auditor or clerk with the reason for rejection noted. ([Minn. Stat. 203B.23](#); [Minn. Stat. 203B.24](#))

Rejected Ballots

Rejecting 5 or More Days Before the Election – Sending a Replacement

If a ballot is rejected at least five days before the election, officials must send the voter a replacement ballot and materials. The rejection must also be recorded, including the date of rejection, the reason, and the date a replacement was issued.

- If SVRS is used, the system records this information automatically when the ballot board marks the ballot as rejected.
- If SVRS is not used, officials must record the information manually in a log or spreadsheet.

All rejected ballots must remain sealed and stored in a separate container.

Rejecting Within 5 Days of the Election – Contacting the Voter

If a ballot is rejected within five days of the election, the ballot board must make reasonable efforts to contact the voter by phone or email and document those attempts. A replacement ballot is not required at this stage, but one may be issued if the voter requests it.

Mail election voters do not receive the post-election rejection notice sent to absentee voters six to ten weeks after the election. Rejection notices are only sent to voters whose absentee ballot was rejected in a polling place election.

[\(Minn. Stat. 203B.121\)](#).

Marking a Ballot as Rejected in SVRS

When a ballot is rejected, the ballot record in SVRS must be updated to reflect that status. If the “Resend Ballot” box is checked, the original ballot record is marked as rejected and a new initialized ballot is added to the absentee ballot application record. Election staff can then print replacement labels by going to **Reports > Absentee Ballot Report Category > AB Labels Avery (or Dymo)** and selecting either “Replacement ballots only” or “Both initially issued and replacement ballots.”

Accepted Ballots

When a ballot is accepted, the auditor, clerk, or ballot board must ensure the roster reflects that the voter has already cast a ballot by marking “MB” or “AB” on the signature line. If SVRS is used, acceptance is documented in the system once the ballot board makes the determination.

Marking a Ballot as Accepted in SVRS

After the close of business on the eighteenth day before the election, accepted return envelopes may be opened. At that time, secrecy envelopes are separated from the return signature envelopes, secrecy envelopes are opened, and ballots may be duplicated if needed. Accepted ballots are then placed in a ballot counter or box for tabulation.

Direct Balloting and Mail Elections

“Direct balloting” refers to the process described in [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subd. 3](#), where voters cast an absentee ballot directly into a ballot counter rather than using envelopes. This process may begin 18 days before the election if authorized by the county auditor, or by the municipal or school district clerk in a standalone special mail election. To use direct balloting, the voter must complete an absentee ballot application and sign a voter’s certificate.

Direct balloting is available only for regular absentee ballots. Registered voters in a mail election cannot use direct balloting with their mail ballot. However, during the 18 days before the election, a registered mail voter may come into the election office to:

- Return their sealed voted mail ballot, or
- Request that their mail ballot be spoiled, complete an absentee ballot application, and then vote using direct balloting.

Non-registered voters in a mail election jurisdiction may also use direct balloting beginning 18 days before the election, when they apply for, receive, and return an absentee ballot that includes a voter registration application.

Direct balloting is an *option* and if SVRS is not used to administer mail election ballots, it is strongly discouraged.

Note: If direct balloting is considered, immediately contact the county or the OSS to schedule a coordination meeting.

Polling Places and Election Judges

In a mail election conducted under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), the office of the election official serves as the required polling place. This office must provide enough voting stations to meet expected demand and must include at least one assistive voting device that allows voters with disabilities to cast their ballot privately and independently. On Election Day, one or more secure drop boxes must be available for voters to return their ballots.

At least two election judges must be present throughout Election Day to accept ballots returned in person and to process Election Day registrations, with additional judges appointed as needed. Election judges are appointed according to [Minn. Stat. 204B.19–204B.21](#).

Non-Registered Voters on Election Day

Voters who are not registered by the 21-day pre-registration deadline may still vote on Election Day in a mail election, but only by using the absentee process. [Minn. R. 8210.3000, subp. 5](#) extends absentee voting in mail elections until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, an exception to [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#), which generally ends absentee voting at 5:00 p.m. the day before.

The mail election jurisdiction decides before election day if a tabulator will be made available to voters on election day.

A tabulator available on election day is an *option* and if SVRS is not used to administer mail election ballots, it is strongly discouraged.

Note: If having a tabulator available on election day is considered, immediately contact the county or the OSS to schedule a coordination meeting.

On Election Day, a non-registered voter in a mail election has two options:

- Complete an absentee ballot application and a voter registration application, receive a ballot packet, and return it for ballot board review.
- Complete an Election Day Registration (EDR) and deposit their ballot directly into the tabulator if the jurisdiction has chosen to have a tabulator available on election day.

Election judges must conduct the Election Day Registration process. This is not done by ballot board members.

Registered Voters on Election Day

Registered voters may also appear at the election office on Election Day. They may come for several reasons:

- **Return a ballot:** Voters may return their own ballot in person until 8:00 p.m. Ballots must be sealed in the signature envelope and are forwarded to the ballot board. A ballot may also be returned by an agent on behalf of up to three others, provided the envelopes are sealed and signed, the agent shows identification, and their information is recorded in a delivery log.
- **Obtain a witness:** Voters who need a witness may be assisted by eligible staff or election judges. If the ballot is unmarked and unsealed, the witness may assist. If the ballot has already been marked or sealed, it must be spoiled and replaced before it can be completed with a witness. After the ballot is marked in private, the voter and witness complete the signature envelope before it is returned to the ballot board.
- **Request a replacement:** Lost or spoiled ballots may be replaced. The original ballot is marked spoiled in SVRS or on a manual log, and new ballot materials are issued. The voter completes the replacement ballot privately, and the sealed ballot is returned to the ballot board for review.

Important: Vote totals from mail election and absentee ballots cannot be made public before polls close on Election Day ([Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [Minn. R. 8210.3000](#)).

Counting Ballots, Results, and Voting History

Counting Ballots

In a special mail election under [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), all mail and absentee ballots are counted together and reported as one combined vote total. Ballots may not be counted until after 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Once all mail and absentee ballots have been processed, election staff may print the results or hand count the ballots.

Results Reporting

After 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, the results of all accepted mail and absentee ballots may be made public. The ballot board must complete a combined summary statement of the mail and absentee returns for the election jurisdiction.

Voting History

Voting history for mail voters must be posted within six weeks of the election. In the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), voters who returned a mail ballot receive an “M” in the voter history record. Voters who submitted a separate absentee ballot application and returned an absentee ballot receive an “A.”

If the SVRS Mail Ballot Module is not used, election staff must enter voting history manually, selecting the appropriate method for each voter. For most voters in a [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#) election, the default method is mail ballot. Absentee ballot should be selected only if the voter submitted an absentee application (non-registered voters and registered voters who had their ballot sent to a different address than their registration record’s residential address).

If the SVRS Mail Ballot Module is used, instructions for posting and applying voting history are available in Northstar or from your county elections office.

Important: Once rosters are marked complete and overnight processing has taken place in SVRS, additional voting history must be added directly to individual voter records using the manual process.

Helpful Links

Absentee/Mail Ballot Instructions – Minnesota Secretary of State

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/absenteemail-ballot-instructions/>

Election Administrator Forms – Minnesota Secretary of State

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-administrator-forms/>

Sample Absentee/Mail Ballot Envelopes – Minnesota Secretary of State

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/sample-absenteemail-ballot-envelopes/>

Appendix A

RESOLUTION EXAMPLE

RESOLUTION EXAMPLE

County / City / School District of _____
State of Minnesota

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A MAIL ELECTION

Motion: _____

Second: _____

The County Board / City Council / School Board of _____, Minnesota, does hereby resolve as follows:

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes, section 204B.46 authorizes a county, municipality, or school district to conduct a special election by mail for the submission of a ballot question to the voters; and

WHEREAS, a resolution authorizing a mail election must be adopted at least 84 days prior to the election, and notice must be provided to the county auditor accordingly;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Board / City Council / School Board of _____ that the jurisdiction will conduct a mail election on the following date:

Election Date: _____

Ballot Question(s): [Insert ballot question text or reference]

The election will be conducted entirely by mail in accordance with the requirements of Minn. Stat. 204B.46 and all other applicable provisions of Minnesota election law. Ballots will be mailed to all registered voters, and a ballot board will be appointed to process returned ballots.

Passed by the County Board / City Council / School Board this ____ day of _____, 20____.

Signed by: _____

Presiding Officer

Attested by: _____


Clerk or Administrator

Aye:

Nav:

Appendix B


Outgoing “Unvoted Ballot” Transmittal Envelope

<p>County Elections 8210 710th St Wintergrove, MN 55155 [phone number] [Email address]</p>		44mm	72mm
		23mm	
<p>OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOTING MATERIAL— FIRST CLASS MAIL</p> <p>To: Mary Jane Voter 203B Elm Ave. Summerville, MN 55016</p>			

Read and follow the enclosed instruction sheet to help ensure that your vote will count.

Appendix C

Postage-Paid “Voted Ballot” Return Envelope

County Elections 8210 710th St Wintergrove, MN 55155		44mm	72mm
		23mm	FIM Marks
			
OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOTING MATERIAL– FIRST CLASS MAIL			
To: Auditor or Clerk 8210 710th St Wintergrove, MN 55155			

<p>Have you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Sealed your ballot in the tan ballot envelope?<input type="checkbox"/> Put the ballot envelope in the white signature envelope?<input type="checkbox"/> Filled out the white signature envelope <u>completely</u> and signed it?<input type="checkbox"/> Asked your witness to complete their section and sign their name?<input type="checkbox"/> Put the white signature envelope into this envelope? <p>Return your ballot so it is received by Election Day.</p>
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