

Advance Voting Polls

At a Glance

Increasingly, Advance Voting is becoming popular as a way for voters to exercise their franchise in a manner they find more convenient. From the standpoint of mitigating COVID-19 risks, the spread of voting over a number of days is extremely helpful in that it reduces the likelihood of crowding. However, it also brings additional challenges that should be kept in mind to keep voters and election workers as safe as possible.

What is Advance Voting?



Not so long ago, Election Day Voting was the only time in which voters could cast their ballots. Increasingly, voters have chosen Advance Voting opportunities as a way to cast their ballot that better fits their active lifestyles. Advance voting will vary by jurisdiction both to its hours and to the number of days on which it occurs. An-

other difference at the provincial level is that on Election Day, voters must vote at the poll in their specific polling division. During Advance Voting, however, they are free to vote at any poll in their constituency.

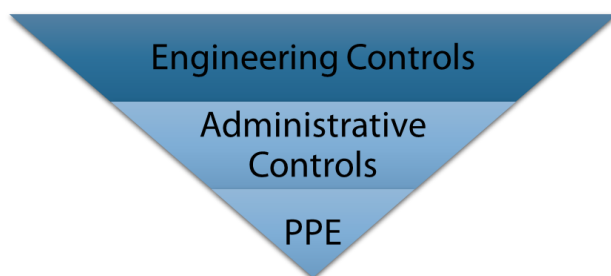
What are the Main areas of Risk from COVID-19 for Advance Voting?

COVID-19 is primarily spread through the air and to a lesser extent on surfaces. The main vulnerabilities then at these poll locations are voters and workers being in direct contact with each other and with surfaces.

Beyond the risks that are there for any Election Day poll, Advance Voting primarily brings additional obligations for cleaning and sanitization given that Advance polls typically run over several days.

How do I mitigate the risk of COVID-19 at Advance Voting Polls?

As with Election Day polls, the first place to start when mitigating risks, is to apply the Hierarchy of Controls that has been used by a number of health care providers including the Saskatchewan Health Authority.



The Hierarchy of Controls is a strategy to mitigate risks by reducing hazards to the lowest possible degree. Start at the top by removing possibilities for exposure and work your way down to using PPE in those cases where you have no other option.

1. Engineering Controls

If possible, place a barrier directly between individuals as a way to prevent contact and possible exposure. This can be an acrylic or plexi-glass barrier such as you might see in a grocery store.

At the Advance Voting polling station, the barriers can be set up at the entrance to separate voters from workers, and it can also be on the poll table.

2. Administrative Controls

Once you have used all of the engineering controls that are practical, the next step is to walk through a mockup of the poll location and consider all of the places where contact can occur. A few considerations to keep in mind are:

- ◆ How can 2 m (6 ft) of space be preserved between people at all times?
- ◆ What surfaces or objects might be touched?
- ◆ How can communications be used to direct voters in such a way that crowding can be discouraged?
- ◆ How do voters need to be directed to make their way through the poll?

To answer these sorts of questions, you should try to design policies, procedures and signage that can guide safe behaviors. These should include:

- ◆ Policies regarding screening for COVID-19 for workers and voters
- ◆ Policies regarding hand hygiene and sanitization of surfaces. This is especially important for the several days of advance voting
- ◆ Signage to maintain physical distancing and to ensure proper wayfinding
- ◆ Protocols for how to limit gathering size

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Finally, it is essential that personal protective equipment is procured and available for workers and voters. For further information on PPE, please see the Best Practice Sheet on Personal Protective Equipment, available on the Elections Saskatchewan website.

Instituting these three control mechanisms can help ensure that voters and workers can attend Advance Polls safely and with reduced risk.

Where can I find more information?

Information regarding municipal elections can be found from the Ministry of Government Relations.

306-787-2680

Further information on electoral best practice during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found here:

<https://www.ifes.org/publications/guidelines-and-recommendations-electoral-activities-during-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/elections-and-covid-19>

About Elections Saskatchewan

Elections Saskatchewan is the province's impartial, independent, election management body. Given a mandate from the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, it organizes, manages and oversees provincial electoral events

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