

Election Day Polls

At a Glance

For most elections, Election Day is the highest turnout day for voters and the busiest day for election administrators. With COVID-19 present there are a number of factors that elections administrators should keep in mind to keep workers and voters as safe as possible.

What is Election Day Voting?



Not so long ago, Election Day Voting was the only time in which voters could cast their ballots. To this day, Election Day remains the most common way for voting and thus it is essential that election administrators think seriously about the risks for COVID-19 transmission and take steps to mitigate that risk.

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

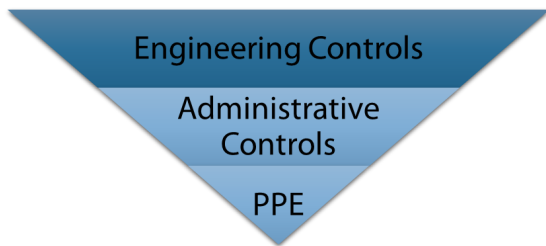
COVID-19 is primarily spread through the air and to a lesser extent on surfaces. The main vulnerabilities then at these poll locations are voters and workers being in direct contact with each other and with surfaces.

While there are a significant number of risks, careful planning can allow for a safer voting experience.

How do I mitigate the risk of COVID-19 at Election Day voting?

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 of the pyramid and by removing possibilities for exposure. Then, work your way down each step to using PPE in those cases where you have no other option. As always, the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan should provide guidance throughout.

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 Election Day 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 behaviors. These should include:

- ◆ Policies regarding screening for illness of workers and voters
- ◆ Policies regarding hand hygiene
- ◆ Signage to maintain physical distancing
- ◆ Signage to ensure proper way-finding

- ◆ Protocols for how to limit gathering size

3. *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

As a final control, it is essential that personal protective equipment is procured, and workers and voters are clear about the expectations and policies regarding its use. 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 Election Day polls more 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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