

# **Wilton Emergency Elections Procedures**



**Approved 9/6/2011  
Board of Selectmen**

# Wilton Emergency Elections Procedures

## Overview

This plan provides guidance to election officials—at the polls and in the central office at the Wilton Town Hall—for actions to be taken in case of various emergencies on Election Day when school is not in session. As required by state law, this plan is approved by Wilton’s Board of Selectmen, meets the protocols of Wilton’s Emergency Preparedness Plan, and has been submitted to the Secretary of the State (SOTS) for approval. Review of emergency protocols will be included in the state-mandated training required of elections workers before every election.

The plan addresses the following Election Day emergencies:

- ballot shortage
- shortage of poll workers
- power outages
- fires and fire drills
- bomb scares
- voting machine malfunction
- disorder at the polling place/acts of violence/intimidation
- weather emergencies or other natural disasters
- injuries at polling places
- removal of poll workers

In each case, the plan provides guidance to election officials and resources for handling each situation.

## **Assessment of the Polling Place**

As part of their normal preparation before Election Day, the registrars of voters should conduct an assessment of each polling place. This assessment should include the following steps:

- Locate fire extinguishers/fire alarms. Inform all election officials of their location.
- Identify emergency escape routes/exits. Identify a temporary indoor safety location for weather emergencies, such as impending tornadoes.
- Identify a predetermined assembly point to be used in the case of evacuation at least 300 feet away from the building and outside of parking areas, if possible.
- Assign specific emergency tasks to moderators and assistant registrars for use in any emergency evacuation or relocation.
- Identify potential hazard areas (icy steps/sidewalks, slick/wet floors) and notify custodial or management staff of the polling place to correct the hazards.
- Identify dialing procedures for contacting 911 (Determine whether an outside line requires dialing additional digits such as “9” resulting in 9-911).
- Provide emergency supplies to every polling place (flashlights, list of important phone numbers, etc.) and a listing of emergency contact numbers.
- Alert moderator to location of defibrillator equipment on site.
- Ensure that every polling place has access to cell phones for emergencies.
- List current emergency numbers for facility managers or their designated contacts for every polling place, including home/cell numbers. Include a person nearby who has the keys to the building and polling place.
- Send a list of polling places to the Wilton Police, Wilton Fire Department, and Wilton EMS before Election Day.
- Identify alternate polling places—within each voting district—for emergency relocation and means of transportation of supplies and equipment.
- Familiarize all officials with the method of documenting any emergency incident.

## **Election Day—General Emergency Procedures**

State statutes require that polls **MUST** be open for voters to vote at 6:00 a.m. Election officials **MUST** be present by 5:15 a.m.

- **If doors to the polling place are locked**, the moderator should ensure, prior to Election Day, that he has phone numbers for contacting a facility custodian or the custodial management staff. If he cannot make contact with one of the aforementioned individuals, he should contact the registrars and begin following the guidelines set forth for an alternate polling location in the Election Emergency Plans.
- **If election supplies are destroyed**, immediately call the registrars so that new supplies may be furnished.

### **Polling Place Evacuation and Emergency Relocation**

For safety emergencies—fires, bomb scares, acts of violence—the polling place moderator should immediately contact Wilton fire or law enforcement emergency services by calling 911. They should also contact the registrars of voters' office as soon as possible after reporting incident to 911.

Moderator and assistant registrars should get a headcount of workers and voters in the polling place. Alert all individuals of the emergency circumstances & remind them of the predetermined assembly area. If the polling site must be evacuated, all persons should assemble at a predetermined assembly point at least 300 feet away from the building and outside of parking areas, if possible. The moderator should designate one election official to make sure everyone is evacuated from the polling place and another to check that they are assembled at the meeting area.

After contact with local emergency services, the registrars of voters should contact the Secretary of the State and propose an alternate location and method of continuing the election. Complete an emergency polling place report and e-mail/fax it to the Secretary of the State. Registrars must make arrangements to transport the necessary equipment & supplies to the new location.

Before transporting voting machines, the voting machine tenders should note the "Public Counter" number on the voting machine(s), turn off the machine to guard against further voting, unplug, and seal the machine in its transfer case. Secure the voted ballots and checker lists. Roll out ballot bin, gather unvoted ballots and any spoiled ballots, gather checker lists. Moderators may use the big blue metal storage locker to transport supplies.

The moderator should designate an elections officer to list the names of anyone who checked in before the evacuation, but were unable to vote. All ballots of such voters should be collected and marked "SPOILED". If such voters return to vote, they should be issued new ballots and checked off the elections officer's list.

Voters must be notified by the most efficient means possible—Wilton’s “Code Red” service, town website, fliers, television and radio—of any new polling location. Notices should also be posted at and outside the original polling place.

Election officials should advise voters they may do one of the following, depending on the circumstances:

- Wait until the building can be re-entered.
- Proceed to the alternate polling place to vote. WHS to Middlebrook, Middlebrook to WHS, Miller/Driscoll to Middlebrook. If all 3 schools are unusable, the election will be moved to Town Hall.

One official should stay with the evacuated voters who have been checked in but not yet voted, and voting should recommence (either inside the polling place or at the alternate location) as soon as it is possible and safe. Voters will use own means of transportation to reach the alternative polling place.

If all voters and personnel have been evacuated to a safe location, and only if it is safe to do so, polling place officials should take with them the following:

- Optical scan voting machine turned off (no ender card), sealed, secured, and guarded
- Checker books
- Public counter number recorded from tabulator
- List of voters who checked in but had not voted and moderators’ bag containing election day forms
- Unused ballots, secured
- Voted ballots, either secured in a sealed bag or locked in the ballot bin
- Ballot bins, if feasible
- Personal belongings

## **Resume the election**

The registrars of voters—with SOTS approval—may authorize moving the polling to another location if there will be a prolonged or permanent evacuation. In the event relocation is authorized, an election official must leave directions to the new location posted on the doors (post on both regular and handicapped accessible entryways). The directions should indicate the time this polling place was vacated and on whose authority, e.g., *Vacated by authority of the Wilton Registrars of Voters @2 p.m. To vote, please report to*

\_\_\_\_\_ .

## **Specific Emergencies**

## **Emergency Reproduction of Ballots/Ballot Shortage**

- When needed, registrars may make copies of official ballots and request police assistance with delivery to the polling places. Use the receipt contained in the Moderator's Handbook for such emergency delivery.
- Registrars should assure that the correct ballot is delivered to the proper polling place.
- Registrars should remind polling place officials that voted copies of ballots will not be scanned by the tabulator, but should instead be deposited into the auxiliary bin of the ballot bin and hand-counted at the close of the polls, using, as nearly as possible, the method for hand-counting absentee ballots or for performing post-election audits.
- Counting should be conducted in teams of 3 or 4 with two sets of eyes verifying the voter's intent.
- Registrars should provide adequate supplies and separate tally sheets for all hand-counting of ballots.

## **Shortage of Election Officials**

- **If the voting district is short of election officials**, the moderator should report the shortage immediately to registrars of voters so that they can replace the official with a back-up worker. The other election officials must proceed in opening the polls.
- **If the moderator does not arrive at the polling place with keys to the elections supply locker**, any election official present should notify the registrar by 5:15 a.m. The registrars will attempt to reach the moderator at home and, if necessary, will deliver keys immediately to the polling place. If a voter must leave before ballots are available, take voter's name and phone number for contacting later in the day.
- **If weather emergencies make travel impossible for workers**, registrars will arrange for alternate transportation of workers.
- **If the moderator is ill or has a family emergency before the election**, the registrars will appoint an emergency moderator.

## **Power Outage**

- Contact the registrar of voters office. They will attempt to get power restored or auxiliary power provided.
- If possible, contact the custodial or management staff of the polling place.
- Most equipment should remain operational. If a tabulating device becomes inoperable, instruct the voter to deposit his ballot into the auxiliary bin slot on the ballot bin.
- Attempt to find an alternate source of light until power is restored. Meanwhile, use flashlights, provided with your election supplies.
- If feasible, the polling location may temporarily be moved to another area of the building.

### **If power cannot be restored:**

The registrars—with Secretary of the State approval—may authorize moving the polling to another location. See General Emergency Procedures above. **If the power goes out during the canvass of the election results:** Elections officials—such as assistant registrars—from both major political parties must remain with the ballots, tabulators, and tabulator tapes at all times before moving the election equipment and records to an alternate location.

## **Fire**

- Call 911.
- Evacuate everyone to the predetermined assembly point.
- When evacuation and relocation of the polling place are necessary, follow the General Emergency Procedures, as above.

## **Bomb Threat**

- If a bomb threat is phoned into a polling place, get as much information from the caller as possible. If possible, have another person listen to the conversation. Do not be afraid to ask questions of the caller.
- Call 911 and report everything about the threat exactly as the caller made it to you.
- Notify the registrar's office as soon as possible after calling 911.
- Evacuate everyone from the polling place using the General Emergency Procedures contained in this document.
- The person who received the threat call should document or record the conversation details immediately.
- Registrars of Voters will alert the Secretary of the State as soon as possible.

## **Voting Machine Malfunction**

**If voting equipment malfunctions or is damaged**, immediately contact the registrars' office to determine a plan for using the back-up tabulator or the auxiliary bin. If needed, voted ballots may be placed in the auxiliary bin until the polls close, as instructed by the registrars. Then the ballots will be fed through the counter. Ballots may also be hand counted if necessary.

**If the ballot bin is damaged or missing**, immediately report this to the registrar and use the back-up ballot bin or any sealed container.

**If the registrar's phones are not working**, registrars must contact all moderators to alert them to use their cell phone numbers until further notice.

**If the ballot box fills**, election workers may open the ballot container and empty the ballots with the following safeguards:

- The optical scan ballot bin shall be opened in plain sight of any authorized party representatives or other observers, with ballots sealed in a ballot transfer case, and securely stored.
- A minimum of two election officers, representing both political parties, shall execute such a transfer of ballots.

**If ConnVERSe system becomes disabled**, use voter registration cards to verify status of voters, request assistance from SOTS or other municipalities.

## **Disorder at the Polling Place/Violence/Intimidation**

As the chief official at each polling place, moderators are authorized, by state law, to preserve the orderly conduct of elections. In performing their duties, moderators may evict from the polling place any person who interferes with the orderly process of voting, prevent unidentified persons from loitering in and within 75 ft of the polling place, and protect the right of voters to cast a ballot in

private. Moderators should request any disorderly person to leave the premises. If needed, moderators should call Wilton Police Department at 911.

## Weather

The registrars should monitor reports of extreme weather conditions prior to elections. Moderators should note weather conditions in the moderator's journal or diary.

- **If extreme weather is predicted *before* the election**, arrange with custodians or managers of the polling place to have the facility open and the parking lots cleared for voters. Registrars should arrange with the Wilton Police Department for transport of essential election personnel, based upon availability.
- **If a dangerous, impending condition is *predicted* from a credible source**, *while* the election is being held, follow the appropriate plans:
  - ❖ In the event of an **earthquake**, evacuate the building using the procedures outlined in this document and assemble at the predetermined evacuation assembly point, if possible.
  - ❖ In the event of a **tornado**, calmly assemble voters and election officials in an internal space away from windows, preferably in an enclosed hallway.
- In the event of **icy/snowy/treacherous walkways**, assign an election official to contact school custodians to keep entrances and exits free of ice and snow. Keep the registrars apprised of conditions and the steps taken to improve those conditions.
- **Flooding *before* the polls open**: first notify the registrars who will contact the Secretary of the State. The local elections officials must follow the guidelines established in the General Emergency Procedures.
- **Flooding *after* the polls open**: first inform the registrars. Then follow evacuation procedures.

## Illness, Injury, or Death

- Have an election official call emergency service at 911.
- Make sure that the election official identifies himself, provides the full address of the polling place and the name of the building, gives directions to the polling place, and gives information about the extent of the person's injury.
- In the event of a serious illness, injury, or death, call the registrars' office after completing a call to 911.
- In the event of the sudden, unexpected death of both registrars and their deputies, any assistant registrars—one from each major party—may assume the duties of the registrars. SOTS should be informed of any such events.
- Provide emergency medical treatment to injured persons if trained or when directed by emergency dispatch personnel via the telephone. A first aid kit will be located at each facility for use in the treatment of minor first aid treatment. Do not offer or provide medications (either over the counter or otherwise) or medical instructions to the individual.
- Complete a report after resolution of the incident for the registrars. See attached ICE form. Record incident in Moderator's diary.
- Do not make any statement admitting guilt or wrongdoing.



## **Removal of Poll Workers**

By state law, the registrars may remove any moderator, checker, tabulator tender, or ballot clerk for incompetence and appoint a competent person to fulfill those duties. Moderators may appoint any elector to serve at a polling place in an emergency situation. Emergency poll workers must take the oath of office before performing duties as elections officials.

CYK/TG 9/6/11