

Emergency Planning

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Emergency Planning questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

The Standard

Your election office is prepared to address emergencies that disrupt administrative or voting functions. To achieve this standard:

- You have comprehensive plans that address continuity, contingency, and response that are reviewed prior to every election and updated every two years.
- You train staff and poll workers and align with all affected stakeholders so everyone understands their roles and expectations.
- You have alternate methods to access important systems and materials needed to navigate emergencies.
- You have relationships with appropriate partners across all levels of government for support, and they are informed about your planning protocols.
- Your emergency plans include how and what to communicate with the public in emergencies.

Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Continuity plans:** Plans for how critical operations can continue to run during major disruptions, especially the unavailability of staff who usually handle those operations.
- **Contingency plans:** Plans for what to do if primary systems, processes, or locations are unavailable.
- **Response plans:** Plans for what actions will be taken during or after a specific type of incident.

Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who create or maintain emergency plans
- Staff who manage training of staff members and poll workers
- Staff who communicate with the public

Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- Emergency planning documents, such as, continuity of operations plans, incident response plans, and crisis communications plans.
- Training materials for staff and poll worker roles in emergencies.

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

- Please describe your office's process for developing emergency plans.
- Please provide a specific example of how your staff are cross-trained to execute roles and responsibilities during an emergency.
- Please describe your relationship with partners across all levels of government. How do they support your emergency planning processes and implementation?

Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [60-Minute Toolkit for Emergency Readiness](#): This set of resources provides a comprehensive framework and set of useful documents to prepare for a wide range of crises.
- [Crisis communications toolkit](#): This nonpartisan toolkit provides primers, tips, templates, and examples to help in recognizing, planning for, and responding to communications crises.

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://www.certifyexcellence.org) to apply