



Commonwealth of Virginia
Fairfax County

Mail Receipt Manual

November 5, 2024

General & Special Elections

This manual contains only the basic elements of Central Absentee Precinct operations and is not intended to be used as a comprehensive guide of Virginia election law or procedures. Virginia election laws govern elections in Virginia. If there is an inadvertent contradiction in the "Mail Receipt Manual," Virginia election laws take precedence.



A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be made upon request. To request this information in an alternate format, contact:

Issued by the
Fairfax County Office of Elections
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Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Election Support: 703-324-4735, TTY 711
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Fairfax County Office of Elections Contact Information

- **Office of Elections, General Election Information:**
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- **Office of Elections, Election Officer Information:**
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- **Mail Receipt Operation:**
Phone: 703-324-5101 or 703-324-5014
- **Absentee (AB), Absentee Voting Information:**
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Email: absenteevoting@fairfaxcounty.gov
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/absentee-voting-mail
- **Central Absentee Precinct (CAP):**
Phone: 703-324-4711
For Info: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/central_absentee.htm
Email: centralabsentee@fairfaxcounty.gov

Background – Office of Elections/Absentee Ballot Division

The Fairfax County Office of Elections is committed to providing each citizen of Fairfax County with the opportunity to exercise their right to vote in an efficient and equitable manner. This effort is accomplished in accordance with the Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as the Code of Virginia.

It is the responsibility of the Office of Elections to ensure each election is run fairly and openly. Virginia state law requires all Election Office employees to execute their duties to the best of their abilities and that they studiously endeavor to prevent, fraud, deceit, and abuse when conducting elections.

The Absentee Ballot division within the Office of Elections, is responsible for executing and managing those actions required to mail out, receive, and account for absentee ballots sent to registered voters in Fairfax County. Absentee ballots are only sent to voters who have requested, in writing, to vote absentee.

There are several processes involved to accurately and efficiently; receive, sort, count, and record receipt of the voter's ballot into the statewide voter database.

This manual will detail the actions taken by the Office of Elections when it receives returned absentee ballots from voters.

Absentee Ballot Process Overview

If a voter wishes to vote absentee, their first step is to submit, in writing, an absentee ballot application to the Fairfax County Office of Elections. The application must be mailed, emailed, or submitted through the Department of Elections online portal. An absentee ballot cannot be requested via telephone. When the voter's request is approved, an absentee ballot is sent to the requester within three business days once ballots have been printed.

Mail Receipt Process - Step by Step

After a voter receives and votes their ballot, the ballot is returned to the Office of Elections inside a sealed, office provided, return envelope. The methods of return include:

- a. United States Postal Service (USPS)
- b. Commercial mail delivery service (FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc.)
- c. Placement in a drop box at early voting locations during operating hours; or into the 24/7 drop box located at the Fairfax Government Center.
- d. On election day only, placed in a drop box at a polling location.
- e. Hand delivered to the Fairfax County Office of Elections, Suite 323.

1. Receipt of USPS/commercial mail delivery services

Two election staff members will collect mail from the Fairfax County mailroom each workday between 10:30 AM -12:00 Noon and take the returned mailers to the designated elections office workroom.

Once in the designated elections office workroom, mailers are sorted, counted, and stamped with the date received. The following details this process.

Sort, face, and tray return mailers by category:

- a. **Domestic/UOCAVA (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act)**
- b. **UOCAVA - Email**
- c. **24/7 Drop Box**
- d. **Satellite Drop Box**
- e. **Undeliverable (return to sender)**

Domestic/UOCAVA Return Mailers:

- a. Pull tab on mailer to disclose the Statement of Absentee Voter information. Verify that the voter completed the required information. Any information missing will require further review by the Curing Team. Place any mailers that need curing into a designated tray.
- b. Count and date-stamp the front of each return mailer. Do not cut open the return mailer to expose the ballot.
- c. Each category of return mailers receives a “bundle number” based on the day the mailer was received in the election’s office (month/day/return mailer category).
- d. For example:
 - i. **9-23-1 – USPS/FedEx/UPS/DHL mailers received on 9/23**
 - ii. **9-23-1E – Email return mailers received on 9/23**
 - iii. **9-23-1D – Drop box mailers received on 9/23 (24/7 and Room 323)**
 - iv. **9-23-1DE – Emails deposited into Drop Box on 9/23**
 - v. **9-23-1DS – Drop box mailers rec. from Satellite Offices on 9/23**
 - vi. **11-5-1DP – Drop box mailers rec. from Precinct Offices on 11/5**
- e. Complete a separate daily return mailer bundle tracking log for each of the ballot category bundles (domestic/UOCAVA digital, UOCAVA email, drop box). The tracking log stays with the individual bundle of return mailers as they go through the workflow process; receipt, check-in, and pre-processing (open/extraction and scan).
- b. Place the return mailer bundles with their associated tracking logs into their designated trays. Mailers that obviously need curing are separated and placed in the front of each tray (using the categories stated above).
- a. Label the outside of each tray with the return mailer bundle number. Place the trays with return mailers in date of receipt order and store them on shelving in the designated secured storage room.
- b. Track the daily number of return mailers received for all categories on the master log.
- c. Store trays with return mailers in a designated secured storage room in preparation for transfer to Check-in and/or Opening and Extraction Teams.

Return Mailers: Email

- a. Date mailers using the portable date-stamper (Acroprint clock).
- b. Count by hand and record count on daily worksheet and master log.
- c. Using VERIS, record the voter ID, CD, and Precinct numbers in red ink on the upper top right side of email return mailer. Sort email mailers in sequential order by Precinct number.
- d. Place in designated trays. On the outside of each tray, place a label using the bundle # format noted above, e.g., 9-23-1E – for email return mailers.

Receipt from drop boxes: Government Center 24/7 curbside box and Suite 323

Two or more times each workday, two election staff members will collect return mailers from the Government Center 24/7 curbside drop box and the drop box located in the Fairfax County Office of Elections, Suite 323. Keys are required to open secure drop boxes.

Election staff will wear an “elections” vest while collecting the drop box mailers. After obtaining the keys for the rolling security box and drop boxes; the election staff will then:

- a. Take the rolling security box and keys, check Suite 323 blue drop box on your way out to the curbside drop box.
- b. Remove all return mailers from each box and place them in the rolling security box. Lock the security box, insert a pre-numbered zip tie, and return to the secured ballot workroom.
- c. Staff will open the secured box and complete a chain of custody form for that pickup. The custody form must be signed by two election office staff members.
- d. Pull tab on mailer to disclose the Statement of Absentee Voter information. Verify that the voter completed the required information. Any information missing will require further review by the Curing Team. Place any mailers that need curing into a designated tray.
- e. Count/date stamp mailers and record on daily count sheet. There will be two or more number entries on the daily sheet, one for each pickup time. Mailers that obviously need curing are separated and placed in the front of each tray. Mailers should be dated with the date they are picked up from the drop box.

2. Receipt from drop boxes: Early voting satellite locations

A rover delivers return mailers from early voting satellites to the Office of Elections, Monday through Saturday, in Trip LOK Ballot Security bags. Chain of custody forms are signed by election office staff and the sealed pouches are stored in a secure location until the next workday.

On the next workday, two election staff members will:

- a. Initial chain of custody log; pickup pouches from secure storage and take them to the designated elections office workroom.
- b. Open each Ballot Security bag and remove return mailers. Verify, complete, and sign the Satellite Chain of Custody form that was enclosed in the security bag.

- c. Pull tab on mailer to disclose the Statement of Absentee Voter information. Verify that the voter completed the required information. Any information missing will require further review by the Curing Team. Place any mailers that need curing into a designated tray.
- d. Count, date-stamp (using date stamping machine labeled “drop box”) and create a return mailer bundle tracking log. Mailers that obviously need curing are separated and placed in the front of each tray. Always date stamp with date received on Satellite Chain of Custody form, (date voter deposited ballot into the drop box).
- e. Enter the daily return mailer bundle count, by location, on the master log.
- f. Place return mailer bundles, with their associated log in designated trays for storage in a secure location until transfer to the Check-in and/or Opening and Extraction Teams.

3. Undeliverable/Return to Sender Mailers

- a. Date Undeliverable mailers using the portable date-stamper (Acroprint clock).
- b. Count and complete a daily worksheet identifying the quantity of Domestic and UOCAVA mailers that were returned. Attach the daily worksheet to the banded mailers and place in designated tray for further processing in VERIS.

All return mailers, regardless of how they are received in the Elections Office, are kept in secure storage.

Always maintain two-person security for ballots!