



## Election Official Alert: Paper Supply Chain Risk Management

**Election infrastructure** was designated as Critical Infrastructure by the Department of Homeland Security in 2017. Since that time, both governmental agencies and private sector partners have participated in Coordinating Councils to establish best practices for the security of this critical infrastructure sector. The Election Infrastructure Subsector Coordinating Council (EI SCC) consists of private sector partners, including voting equipment manufacturers, ballot printers, mail houses, and other companies engaged in essential pieces of the election process. Last fall, the EI SCC established a working group to identify potential risks to the ballot paper supply chain.

According to the working group’s recently published report, *Ballot Paper Supply Chain Risk Management Working Group: Threats, Vulnerabilities, Risks and Mitigation*<sup>1</sup>, election officials should be aware

of paper supply chain challenges that may impact the 2022 election cycle. All states will hold a November 8 federal general election, and demand for paper election products will be at a peak. Some of these supply chain risks include:

- **Supply Shortages** – Shortages of raw materials, finished products (i.e. paper, envelopes, etc.), and transportation means ballot printers will have less capacity to fulfill print orders.
- **Planning Ahead** – Due to supply chain restraints, orders will take longer to fulfill, and ballot printers may not have the capacity to complete last-minute orders.
- **Budget Considerations** – Supply shortages will lead to higher prices for customers.

### Contingency Planning Considerations: Ballot Paper Supply Chain Checklist

- Supply:**  
Identify alternative sources of materials (ballot paper, envelopes, stickers, etc.)
- Logistics:**  
Determine alternative methods of shipping and storing paper products
- Emergency Planning:**  
Plan for likely emergency situations, including reprints or shipping delays, and use these plans to adjust orders as early as possible

### Contingency Planning Considerations: Envelopes

- Order envelopes at least 4 months in advance of the election
- Consider using envelopes from previous elections, if legally permissible
- Consider using alternative colors, if more readily available
- Consider using alternative and backup printing vendors for ancillary printing needs

Paper supply chain issues affect every aspect of the election process. The charts on the following pages provide an overview of the processes that supply chain issues may affect, potential risks to the paper supply chain, and possible mitigation strategies. Election officials must work with their private sector partners and develop contingency and communications plans to mitigate the impact of supply chain issues. The earlier these plans are made, the more flexibility election officials will have when reacting to emergency situations.

Additional resources from the Elections Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council (GCC) and Sector Coordinating Council (SCC) may be found online at <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/gcc-and-scc-resources>.



<sup>1</sup> Government Facilities Sector, Election Infrastructure Subsector Coordinating Council (February 2022). *Ballot Paper Supply Risk Management, Working Group: Threats, Vulnerabilities, Risks and Mitigation*. Unpublished.



Table 1 – Paper Supply Chain Processes, Risks, and Mitigation Strategies

 Processes	 Risks	 Mitigation Strategies
<b>Budget</b>	Labor and material cost increases impact jurisdictions' budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factor in higher print costs when preparing annual budget justifications</li> <li>If legal challenges to ballots occur, advise the court of the impacts on costs and deadlines</li> <li>If contingency funds are not available, notify the budget authority that additional funds may be needed to cover increased costs</li> </ul>
<b>Contracts</b>	Less paper production and less supply could mean fewer options for printers to fulfill orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure contracts and service agreements as early as possible</li> <li>Carefully vet vendors and ensure they have the capacity to meet the jurisdiction's needs</li> <li>Identify additional printing capacity and backup sources of materials</li> </ul>
<b>Design</b>	Lead time to order custom paper stock has increased, and raw material shortages mean fewer custom paper options are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design materials and inserts with generic sizes, colors, and paper stock</li> <li>Work with vendors to design materials using sizes and colors of paper stock already on-hand</li> <li>Avoid last-minute changes to ballot and envelope orders when possible</li> </ul>
<b>Print Orders</b>	Lead time to order raw materials has increased from days or weeks to months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify anticipated paper needs, and communicate your needs with print and mail vendors as soon as possible</li> <li>Order enough ballot and envelope stock to avoid last-minute orders</li> <li>Order "I Voted" stickers at least 4 months in advance of the election</li> <li>Order envelopes at least 4 months in advance of the election</li> </ul>
<b>Proofing</b>	Longer lead times for printing means reprinting due to errors in proofing will reduce overall supply, and could result in missed deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider adding additional people to your ballot proofing process or adjusting your proofing procedures (for example, reading each ballot style backward and forward)</li> <li>In addition to ballots, be sure to proof all printed materials thoroughly, including envelopes, instructions, voter education materials, and any other election-specific documents</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	Shortage in labor and tractor/trailer combinations have resulted in longer delivery times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate transportation delays, and develop contingency plans for delayed shipments</li> <li>Consider taking early deliveries to hold and store ahead of the election</li> <li>Be flexible with shipping requirements, as the availability of packaging and packaging supplies is reduced (e.g., cardboard)</li> </ul>
<b>USPS</b>	Labor shortages and facility closures can delay the delivery of ballots and balloting materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a working relationship with your USPS representatives to develop a plan for delivering and receiving election mail</li> <li>Create a contingency plan to address delivery challenges, including alternative delivery methods</li> </ul>

**Table 2 – Identify and Plan for Paper Delivery Delays by Product Type**

 Paper Product	 Identify and Plan for Paper Delivery Delays
<p><b>UOCAVA Ballots</b></p>	<p>If ballot stock is not available by the 45-day deadline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate delays and/or solutions implemented that affect voters</li> <li>• Consider legal alternatives to deliver ballots, such as electronic delivery or alternative paper stock</li> <li>• Collaborate with other jurisdictions to supply needed ballot stock</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mailed Ballot Envelopes</b></p>	<p>If mailed ballot envelopes are delayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate delays and/or solutions implemented that affect voters</li> <li>• Consider using envelopes from previous elections, if legally permissible</li> <li>• Consider using alternative colors, if more readily available</li> </ul>
<p><b>Voter Information Guides</b></p>	<p>If voter guide delivery is delayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider posting guides online and informing voters where they can access the information, if legally permissible</li> <li>• Consider including information about where voters can find online guides with mailed ballots</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Election Materials (posters, inserts, poll books, etc.)</b></p>	<p>If preferred paper stock is not available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider alternative colors, sizes, and weights</li> <li>• Consider using alternative and backup printing vendors for ancillary printing needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pre-Logic and Accuracy Testing</b></p>	<p>If test-decks and/or ballot delivery is delayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and reserve alternative testing dates</li> <li>• Communicate changes to the public testing process</li> </ul>
<p><b>Election Day Ballots</b></p>	<p>If ballot inventory is depleted on Election Day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate “runners” so extra supplies can be quickly deployed to polling locations</li> <li>• Deploy extra mailed ballot stock to precincts, if legally permissible</li> <li>• Offer voting on an accessible voting device, if legally permissible</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provisional Ballot Envelopes</b></p>	<p>If provisional ballot envelopes are delayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using alternative envelopes and affixing required affidavits, if legally permissible</li> <li>• If the voting system stores provisional ballots electronically, consider allowing voters to cast a provisional ballot using an accessible voting device</li> <li>• Redistribute supplies from precincts with less provisional ballot envelope demand, to precincts with greater provisional ballot envelope demand</li> </ul>