

Ramsey County Elections Election Systems Security

The security of the systems we use to conduct elections and count votes is of paramount concern to Ramsey County Elections.

Minnesota has a paper-based election system that is easy to independently verify. Each voter's ballot is secured and is the official record of votes in every election, the results of which can be independently audited after Election Day. We use technology for our convenience, not out of necessity.

Here are some details about the steps we take to ensure the accuracy and security of the information we receive from the voters and results of vote counting in every election.

- Voting system – The voting system used by Ramsey County to count, compile and report the votes cast at every election is completely non-networked. The ballot counters at the polling places and the computers used by the Elections Office to program the voting system and compile the votes are not connected in any way to the internet, nor are they connected in any way to the global telecommunications network.

All ballot counters deployed to the polling places are secured by locks and numbered seals. To deter tampering, only the voters and the election judges may approach to within six feet of the ballot counter in the polling places.

All Ramsey County voters cast their votes on a paper ballot which is secured immediately upon the close of voting on Election Day. The official results of voting at every polling place is a paper report produced independently at each polling place and certified by the election judges. These judges represent both major political parties in Minnesota. The process by which the election judges secure the voted ballots and prepare the official results of the votes cast is open to public observation.

On election night, unofficial vote totals are uploaded from the county computer network to the secretary of state. These results are then displayed on the secretary of state's website. These results are transferred from the voting system to the county network manually. No modems, wired or wireless connections of any kind are used to transfer results from the voting system to the county network.

The Ramsey County Sheriff provides on-site security for the Elections Office on Election Day.

Following each state general election, a post-election audit is conducted on a sample of results selected at random by the Ramsey County Canvassing Board. The meeting at which this selection occurs is open to the public, as is the audit itself. The audit of the 2014 state general election confirmed the accuracy of vote counting at a rate of 99.94%.

All vote totals are subject to independent verification by means of a manual examination of the ballots.

- Voter registration records – The records of Ramsey County voters are part of a statewide voter registration system maintained by the secretary of state. Only authorized Ramsey County Elections staff are provided with access to the voter registration system, from computers that have been previously identified and registered with the secretary of state. As advised by the FBI, Ramsey County is closely monitoring the county network that is used to access the statewide voter registration system.

To ensure the accuracy of voter records, old voter records are inactivated but not removed from the voter registration system.

Once a week, Ramsey County creates a backup copy of the voter records in the county, which is then stored at a facility secured by the Ramsey County Sheriff.

If a voter's record cannot be found by the election judges at a polling place, an emergency voting procedure can be implemented after consultation with the Elections Office to ensure that the voter is able to vote.

Voters who are unsure of their registration status or for whom a valid registration record cannot be confirmed may register to vote on Election Day using a state-authorized identification document or a registered voter who can act under oath as a witness.

Eligible Ramsey County voters may register to vote online with the secretary of state. Online registrants must have both a valid Minnesota driver's license or state identification card and an active email address. All information provided is matched against state or federal databases to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

Selected Ramsey County polling places use electronic pollbooks to process pre-registered voters and register new voters. The database for the pollbooks runs on a separate server that is not connected to the internet. The Elections Office has the capability to communicate electronically with the pollbooks on Election Day to update certain voter information. This data is transferred over a private network connection and is encrypted.