

**State of Vermont  
Elections Division  
Office of the Secretary of State**

**Accu-Vote Tabulator**

**Election Day User Procedures**

If you experience **technical difficulty** with the tabulator or memory card(s) during opening, throughout the Election Day, or during closing **please call LHS for technical assistance at 888-547-8683.**

If you have a question about counting ballots or other election procedures, or if you cannot reach LHS Associates, please call an Elections staff person directly at:

Katie Lane-Karnas    802-828-2464

Melanie Hodge        802-828-0175

Kathy DeWolfe        802-828-2304

## OPENING PROCEDURES

NOTE: At least 2 election officials must be present for all procedures.

1. Use the **plastic covered key** to open the **ballot box lid** (lower front lock). Raise the lid, and **at least 2 election officials and any interested citizens must verify that no ballots are in the box. Then close and lock the ballot box.**
2. Use the **plastic covered key** to open and fold down the **upper** front panel access door on the ballot box where the ACCU-VOTE tabulator will be inserted.
3. Slide the Accu-Vote tabulator into the tracks on the ballot box back to within about 3 inches of the back rim of the ballot box. Feed the tabulator power cord through the tube shaped opening from the back of the ballot box. Insert one end of the cord firmly into the Accu-Vote tabulator power receptacle and the other end into the power surge protector strip or heavy duty extension cord (we strongly suggest use of a surge protector strip; make sure the surge protector is turned on!). Slide the Accu-Vote tabulator back to within 1 inch of the back rim.
4. Use the **bare key** to remove the **printer cover** on the Accu-Vote tabulator.
5. Press the **red switch** on the back of the Accu-Vote tabulator to turn on the power to the tabulator. Wait 20 seconds for the machine to start operating – there is a built in delay.
6. After 20 seconds, the Accu-Vote tabulator will **automatically print a zero report** (to demonstrate that all of the candidates and public question tallies are 0 at the start of the Election.) **DO NOT TEAR OFF** or remove the zero report tape. After verifying that all tallies indicate zero (0), two election officials must **sign the bottom of this printout**. Then roll or fold the paper tape so it will fit under the cover.
7. The Accu-Vote tabulator LCD will ask “Do you want another printout?” Press the NO button on the front of the machine. The display will then show the poll number (in most VT towns it will be 1.00) and the ballot count will display “0.”
8. Replace the printer cover and **lock with the bare key**. Fold up and **lock the front panel access door with the plastic covered key** to secure the tabulator in place.
9. Use the **plastic covered key** to **open the top slot of the auxiliary compartment** located on the upper left side of the ballot box and leave it open for the day.
10. The Accu-Vote tabulator is now ready to accept ballots for the election. The Presiding Officer should place 1 set of keys on the coiled bracelet on his/her wrist. The second set of keys can be given to another designated election official.
- 11. Do NOT allow any voters to go to the entrance checklist to begin the process of voting until the Presiding Officer has announced that the polls are open (at the warned opening time).**

## **WHAT IF's During the Election Day**

Instructions for scenarios that may occur with the tabulator throughout Election Day

**POWER OUTAGE** – The tabulator will continue to work on the battery for between 4 and 6 hours depending upon the number of ballots inserted. First determine the cause of the loss of power – check the power strip, etc. Try to determine how long the power will be out. If it will be longer than 4 hours, and if power is available at another public location in town, you may want to consider moving the election. Contact the Elections Division for assistance.

**MEMORY CARD OR TABULATOR MALFUNCTIONS** – If the tabulator will not accept any ballots after you have cleared a jam (see below) or LCD Display shows: “O.K. to format” or “Corrupt Count” or any other unusual occurrence that causes the tabulator to stop functioning – **CALL LHS ASSOCIATES at 888-547-8683 immediately**. Instruct voters to deposit ballots into the Auxiliary Compartment until the tabulator is working again. Do NOT hesitate to call LHS – the sooner you call, the quicker the malfunction will be resolved.

**LHS staff will either walk you through additional steps to take to resolve the problem by telephone OR LHS staff will arrange to have a technical staff person come to your polling place with a new tabulator and new memory card to be installed.** Please complete Forms A and B in Section 8 to document the technical assistance that you receive.

**If LHS needs to provide a new tabulator because of a mechanical or scan reader failure of the tabulator, but the memory cards are o.k. and do not need to be replaced**, two election officials can break the seal on the tabulator to remove the good Memory Card A, place the Memory Card A into the new tabulator, and place a seal. Make notations of the change on your transaction log. Also, please complete the Forms A and B in Section 8 to document the replacement of the tabulator.

**If LHS provides a new tabulator and memory card during the election day, you must put the tabulator into TEST MODE and publicly test the memory card** using the test deck in your notebook (the one you used to test Memory Cards A & B before the election) before resetting the tabulator to Election Mode. LHS staff can help walk you through the steps, but the Presiding Officer and an election official must install the memory card and perform the logic and accuracy test using the ballot test deck you created for testing prior to the election. You will follow the same instructions for the logic and accuracy test that you used to test Memory Card A and Memory Card B before the election.

After the new tabulator and memory card are in Election Mode, you will empty the ballot box and the Auxiliary Compartment and temporarily place these ballots into a ballot bag. You will feed all of these ballots into the new tabulator that you are now using in between voters throughout the day in the same way you feed absentee ballots in between voters.

**BALLOT RETURNED** – If a ballot is returned to the voter, ask the voter to hold the ballot down so no one can see the markings – if you have a two sided ballot, keep some 14 inch file folders near the tabulator so the voter can temporarily cover the ballot.

**Read the message on the LCD Screen on the tabulator:**

1. **“Ballot not read, please re-insert”** means the ballot has not been read and has NOT been counted. **ASK the voter** to try to feed the ballot into the machine in a different orientation – turn the ballot over or insert the bottom instead of the top of the ballot. If the machine returns the ballot after several attempts, the **voter** may return the ballot to the entrance checklist to obtain a new ballot to be marked and inserted, OR the voter may place his ballot in the Auxiliary Compartment.

2. **“Blank voted card”** means that either the voter intentionally did not vote on the ballot OR the voter misunderstood the instructions and marked his choices by circling the names or making marks that the tabulator could not read so the ballot has NOT been counted. **Discreetly ASK the voter if he/she intended to mark choices on the ballot**, and if so, repeat the instructions on how to mark the ballot with the voter and then direct the voter to return his incorrectly marked ballot to the entrance checklist official(s) and obtain a new ballot to mark.

If the voter intentionally left his ballot blank, the election official can use the plastic key to open the upper front access panel door and hold the YES button while instructing the voter to insert his ballot into the tabulator; OR the voter may place his ballot in the Auxiliary compartment.

3. **“Over voted race”** means that the voter marked more candidates for an office than the “Vote for Not More Than” for that race, or a stray mark or a fold on the ballot may have been read as an extra vote. Discreetly explain to the voter that too many choices were marked for one race, and ASK the voter to review the ballot to see if too many candidates were marked for one office or to look for stray marks. If the voter can’t see the error, feed the ballot again.

If the ballot is returned again with “over voted race” on the LCD screen, ask the voter to return his ballot to the entrance checklist to obtain and mark a new ballot, OR if the voter chooses not to mark a new ballot, explain to the voter that the machine will count all properly marked races but will not count the vote in the “over voted office.” The election official can use the plastic key to open the upper front panel access door and hold the YES button while instructing the voter to insert his ballot OR the voter may place his ballot in the Auxiliary compartment.

4. **“Invalid ballot, see official”** means that the election code on the ballot does not match the memory card configuration. This occurs if a ballot from another town or district was mixed in a packet of ballots (either by the printer or by towns with more than one district).

Ask the voter to feed the ballot again in a different orientation. If the ballot is returned again, ask the voter to **look at the upper left on the ballot to verify that the town or voting district is correct**. If the ballot is not for your town or district, notify the entrance checklist officials that a ballot from another town or district was mistakenly given to a voter. Ask the election officials to review remaining blank ballots and remove any incorrect district ballots. The voter must return the incorrect ballot to the ballot officials and obtain and mark a new ballot.

If the town or voting district is correct, and the message “Invalid ballot, see official” continues to appear when the ballot is fed into the tabulator again, ask the voter to look at the ballot again to see if there are any stray marks on the ballot in the area of timing marks or near ovals. Stray marks may cause this message to appear. Whatever the cause, if the message continues to appear, please ask the voter to return the ballot to the ballot officials to obtain and mark a new ballot. If the voter does not want to mark a new ballot, you can place the ballot in the auxiliary compartment to hand count after the polls close.

BALLOT JAM – If a ballot jam occurs and the ballot is “caught” in the tabulator and does not feed through into the ballot box, **read the LCD message BEFORE** attempting to clear the jam - - the message DISAPPEARS as soon as the jam has been cleared.

**Read the message on the LCD Screen on the tabulator. AFTER YOU HAVE READ and repeated the message to the voter or another election official, you are ready to clear the ballot jam.** Unlock the front upper panel and move the tabulator a few inches from the back of the ballot box. Use two hands, one on each side of the ballot, to gently pull the ballot from the scanner to which ever side the ballot can be more easily removed. **DO NOT YANK** – the ballot may tear and render the tabulator unusable. If you can’t see the stuck ballot, unlock the front and move the tabulator to see if a ballot is stuck in the back.

1. **“Counted ballot jammed in reader”** means the ballot has been read and COUNTED already. After you clear the jam, hand the ballot to the voter to deposit the ballot directly into the slot by the back rim of the ballot box.
2. **“Returned ballot jammed in reader”** means that the ballot HAS NOT BEEN COUNTED. After you remove the ballot and clear the jam, hand the ballot to the voter. After you slide the tabulator back and lock the front access panel door, ask the voter to insert the ballot into the tabulator again. If the tabulator returns the ballot again after trying different orientations, ask the voter to place the ballot in the auxiliary compartment to be hand counted.

#### **ALTERNATE PROCEDURES FOR BALLOTS THAT CANNOT BE READ BY TABULATOR –**

Ballots that are damaged, plain paper, or that continue to be rejected by the tabulator after trying to insert in different orientations and after using the YES button for overvotes or blank ballots can now be handled in two different ways.

In 2007, the legislature approved an alternate method for handling ballots that are rejected or that cannot be read by optical scan tabulators by allowing pairs of election officials to transfer the voter’s intent to a duplicate ballot which can then be inserted into the tabulator. 17 V.S.A. §2493(a)(5) A town can continue to use the hand count method (Method 1) or you can use the Method 2 procedures for marking a duplicate ballot as outlined below. If you select Method 2, please conduct training on this method with election officials before the election.

#### **Method 1: Hand Count**

Presiding Officers in towns using tabulators can continue to place all ballots that have been rejected by the tabulator in the Auxiliary compartment. If you choose this method, you will follow the procedures outlined in Section 6, After the Polls Close, to try to insert the ballots into the tabulator again in different orientations and using the YES button to override over votes or blank ballots. If the ballots are still rejected, election officials will hand count these ballots, and the hand tallies will be added to the printer tape totals on a summary sheet as in past elections. **You can skip reading Method 2 if you follow the hand count procedure.**

**Method 2: Procedures for Transferring Voter’s Marks from an Unreadable Ballot (damaged or plain paper) to a Duplicate Ballot**

If you decide to use the new alternative method to transfer the voter markings from unreadable ballots to duplicate ballots that can be read by the tabulator you will have fewer ballots to hand count at the end of the night. However, you will still need to hand count write-in ballots and review all ballots quickly to look for markings of voter intent that were made outside of the OVAL that is read by the tabulator (such as circling a candidate’s name).

**REMINDER: Over voted or completely blank** ballots are initially rejected by the tabulator. Election officials can override the tabulator’s rejection of blank or over voted ballots throughout the Election Day by unlocking the top front panel access door and then holding down the “YES” button on the front of the tabulator while the ballot is inserted by the voter or an election official. Please make sure that you have used the YES button to override overvoted or blank ballots BEFORE marking a duplicate ballot.

**During the Election Day:** The following procedures may be performed when damaged or plain paper absentee ballots are discovered by election officials throughout the day. **Please make sure that you have tried the YES button procedures before deciding that a duplicate ballot needs to be created.** If you do not have enough time during the day, pairs of election officials can create the duplicate ballots after the polls are closed BUT before the Ender Card is inserted (See Closing Procedures).

**Two election officials, not from the same political party, may perform the following steps to mark duplicate ballots and label the original ballots:**

1. One official carefully reads out the voter’s marking for each race while the other official transfers each marking from the unreadable ballot to the duplicate ballot.
2. The two officials then review the ballots to make sure the markings on the duplicate ballot match the voter’s intent as marked on the unreadable ballot.
3. The two officials then place the label for unreadable ballots on the unreadable ballot and the two election officials sign to attest on the label. The Label states: “The voter’s markings on this ballot were transferred to a machine readable ballot by: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.” (We have provided a “master” so you can print labels to use rather than handwriting an attestation on each original ballot—however, if you forget the labels you can handwrite the attestation.)
4. Place the labeled and attested unreadable ballot(s) in the manila envelope for “Spoiled Ballots.”
5. Feed the duplicate ballot into the tabulator.
6. Follow this same procedure throughout the day as unreadable ballots are found or if it is too busy, place the unreadable ballots in the Auxiliary compartment and complete this process at the end of the day BEFORE the ender card is inserted.

