

# BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

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## GUIDANCE FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS WITH AGING VOTING EQUIPMENT

Many jurisdictions around the country will be using equipment in 2016 that is rapidly [approaching the end of its projected lifespan](#). Fortunately, there are steps election officials can take now to reduce the likelihood of problems on Election Day and beyond.

### 1. Review EAC Guidance on Reducing Machine Failures

The bipartisan EAC has published [detailed guidelines](#) on effective maintenance of aging equipment. Soon, they will also publish best practices for pre-election machine testing. Additionally, they offer [tips for post-election audits](#) and ballot reconciliation, which are critical in ensuring that equipment failures do not impact results.

### 2. Update Poll Worker Training

To prepare poll workers to respond effectively to possible Election Day problems, their training must cover common machine failures and their solutions. The Center for Civic Design for the National Science Foundation released [a report](#) noting that training should include explanation of Election Day checklists, as well as emphasis on their importance. These checklists should encompass both standard procedures and troubleshooting steps. Also important is giving poll workers hands-on practice, creating scenarios in training for them to react to, so that when the moment comes, they can act quickly and securely. Officials should consider forming teams of experienced poll workers who can act as first responders when something goes wrong in the polling place.

### 3. Prepare Contingency Plans

Particularly in jurisdictions that use DREs, it is critical that all polling places have enough paper ballots to use in the event of machine failures. Even in jurisdictions that use optical scan machines, plans should be laid to ensure that voters can cast votes securely, and without undue delay, if machine breakdowns occur.

### 4. Report Machine Problems to the EAC

Too often, election officials are [not notified of machine defects or failures](#) discovered by officials in other parts of the country – even when they use the same machines. The EAC should serve as a [clearinghouse](#) for such information, disseminating updates on emerging machine problems to officials nationwide. For this system to work better, state and county officials must promptly report to the EAC any problems they experience arising from aging voting machines.

### 5. Carefully Consider Equipment Purchases

The EAC has produced [helpful suggestions](#) for jurisdictions considering buying new equipment. Leasing is another option, one that the State of Maryland and some counties in Virginia have chosen. Linda Lamone, Election Director of the State of Maryland, and Edgardo Cortes, Elections Commissioner for Virginia could both speak to their experience with equipment leases.