

# Election Security

PREPARE, PLAN, DEPLOY

# Introduction

## Presenters

- **Tony Bridges**
  - Election Security Lead since 2017
- **Emilee Miklas**
  - Communications Director since 2025

## Agenda

- Current Events
- Scenario Discussions
- Q&A

# Current Status

## Heightened Risk

- Geopolitical repercussions
- Contentious elections
- Atmosphere of discontent
- No specific information

## Reduced Support

- CISA changes
- MS-ISAC restructuring



## Recent Incidents

- Scattered Spider social engineering attacks
- Virtual employees

## Lessons Learned

- Be sure of who you are talking to
- Use alternate means of verification
- Be aware of current AI capabilities

## Recent Incidents

- Major ransomware incidents
  - Targeting municipalities, counties, school districts, healthcare, newspaper companies
- Several victims in Wisconsin

## Lessons Learned

- Invest in IT support to keep systems patched
- Maintain offline backups of irreproducible data

## Recent Incidents

- Politically motivated violence
  - Shooting of elected officials in Minnesota
  - Attempted assassination of President Trump
  - SWATTING

## Lessons Learned

- Cultivate relationships with local law enforcement
- DHS trainings
- Site reviews
  - CISA
  - WEM



What Can I Do?

# Make Connections

- ▶ WEC
- ▶ DOA
- ▶ Local law enforcement
- ▶ County Emergency Management
- ▶ Municipal Public Works



- ▶ Professional Orgs
  - ▶ WCCA, WMCA, WTA
  - ▶ GIPAW, MS-ISAC
  
- ▶ News
  - ▶ WEC Newsletter
  - ▶ WisVote News
  - ▶ Clerk's List

Be Aware

# Prepare

## Take Trainings

- ▶ WEC Trainings - <https://electiontraining.wi.gov>
- ▶ DHS Public safety - <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/public-safety-and-violence-prevention>
- ▶ First Aid - <https://www.stopthebleed.org/>

## Plan Ahead

- ▶ Emergency planning resources in your packet and at <https://electiontraining.wi.gov/emergency>

# Scenarios



# Request for Access


- ▶ Three individuals in suits arrive at the polling place wearing official-looking badges
- ▶ They claim to belong to the joint task force on election integrity
- ▶ They are requesting physical access to voting equipment to perform an inspection



# Request for Access



Consider...

- ▶ What is step one when faced with this situation?
  - ▶ What if the agents refuse to leave?
  - ▶ How might you verify the agents' identity?
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# White Powder Found on Ballot

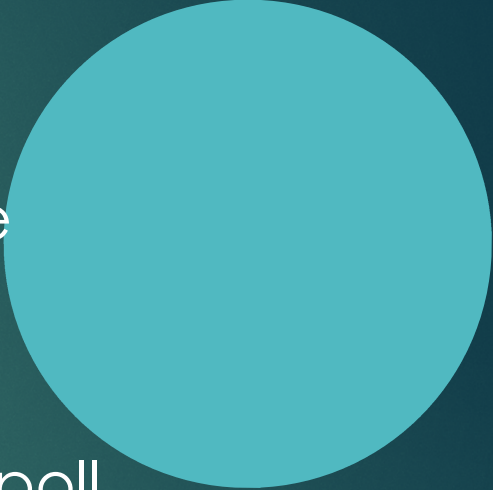


- ▶ An election official opens a ballot envelope and discovers a white powder inside
- ▶ The powder gets in the air and floats through the room

# White Powder



Consider...

- ▶ What should your poll workers do in the seconds and minutes after discovery?
  - ▶ How do you ensure chain of custody?
  - ▶ How do you reassure the public? Your poll workers?
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# Ransomware

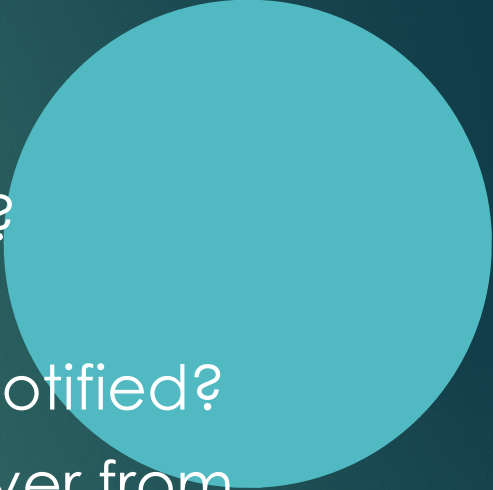
- ▶ After downloading your poll books for the election, your system stops responding.
- ▶ After restarting, instead of a login screen you see a message demanding payment in cryptocurrency to unlock your files



# Ransomware



## Consider...

- ▶ Who could you contact for assistance?
  - ▶ What data might the attackers have accessed? Does anyone need to be notified?
  - ▶ What data would you be able to recover from other sources? What would be permanently lost?
- 



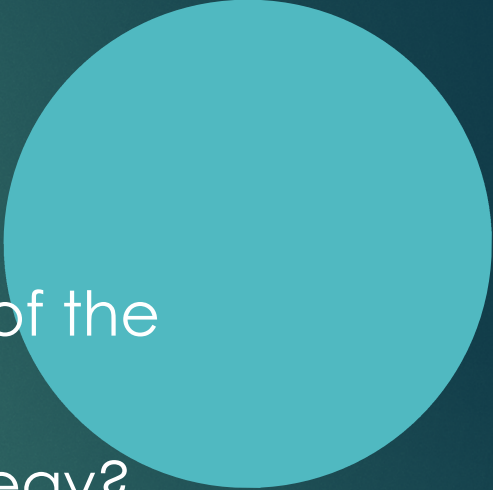
# Severe Voting Machine Malfunctions

- ▶ Election inspectors are reporting widespread issues with tabulators
- ▶ Tamper-evident seals cannot be verified at some locations due to incomplete records or numbers that do not match
- ▶ The story immediately spreads to social media and the press. A prominent political figure is publicly stating that the election is “compromised”

# Severe Voting Machine Malfunctions



Consider...

- ▶ Who needs to be notified?
  - ▶ How do you verify the scope and scale of the problem?
  - ▶ What's your public communication strategy?
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# Emergency Preparedness Materials

<https://electiontraining.wi.gov/emergency>

**Communications Guide**

**Elections Emergency Planning Worksheets**

**Elections Emergency Response Tool**

**Emergency Cards**

**Election Mail Handling Procedures**

# Even More Emergency Preparedness Materials

**Wisconsin Elections Officials Threat Reporting Flowchart**

**Elections 'True Threats' Flyer**

**Readiness and Resilience Checklist for Election Offices**

**Physical Security Checklist for Election Offices**

**Additional Resources**



Questions