The 10-Minute Chain-of-Custody Check

A worksheet for your next staff meeting

Pick one piece of equipment from this election and walk it through the five handoffs. Circle yes, no, or not sure for each. Every “no” or “not sure” is a conversation worth having, and a place to make your documentation even stronger.

Item checked: _____ Serial number: _____

Election: _____ Date checked: _____ Checked by: _____

Handoff	What to check	Yes / No / Not sure	Who could prove it?
1. Storage to staging	Units leaving storage were recorded by serial number and condition	Yes No Not sure	
2. Staging to delivery	The tested unit is the one that was delivered	Yes No Not sure	
3. Delivery to polling place	Someone signed for it, and seals or serial numbers were checked on arrival	Yes No Not sure	
4. Polling place to return	Return count matches delivery count, and it is written down	Yes No Not sure	
5. Return to storage	The unit is logged back in soon after return, with no unlogged gap	Yes No Not sure	

Then ask the team three questions

1. Where did we reconstruct a record from memory?

_____

2. Where did a single signature stand in for two witnesses?

_____

3. What is the one change that would have made this easier next time?

_____

A useful record includes the election name and date, each item’s description with serial number and condition, the date and time of every transfer, and the names and signatures of at least two witnesses. Written procedures should be available for public inspection before every election, and followed in practice. Source: U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Chain of Custody Best Practices.

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