

Mail Balloting Q&A

How long has mail balloting been allowed in Minnesota?

The Minnesota legislature authorized mail voting in 1987. We haven't had any municipalities in Douglas County adopt it until now – as a public safety measure in response to COVID-19.

Did all precincts in Douglas County adopt mail balloting?

No.

First of all, not all municipalities qualify for mail balloting. Per M.S. 204B.45, mail balloting can only be adopted by non-metro townships of any size, and cities with fewer than 400 registered voters.

In response to COVID-19, there were ten municipalities that chose to adopt mail balloting effective for the 2020 election year: Alexandria Twp, Belle River Twp, Brandon Twp, Hudson Twp, Ida Twp, LaGrand Twp, Lund Twp, Moe Twp, Spruce Hill Twp and the city of Millerville.

Voters in all other precincts in Douglas County will vote in their normal polling place on election day.

Will I receive my ballot automatically in the mail, or do I need to request it?

Ballots will automatically be sent by “non-forwardable” mail to everyone that is a REGISTERED VOTER in the mail ballot precinct and whose voter record is not marked ‘challenged’ for any reason. You may verify your voter registration record online at www.mnvotes.org by selecting REGISTER TO VOTE (check my registration). If your voter record is accurate (correct name/address) then you do not need to do anything. You will receive a ballot automatically in the mail.

When can I expect to receive my ballot in the mail? *Ballots will be mailed approximately 30 days prior to the election.*

What will the envelope look like, so I don't mistake it for political junk mail?

The ballot will arrive in a 6" x 10" envelope containing the words “OFFICIAL BALLOT MATERIAL” and this symbol to the right will also appear on the envelope:



What if I don't receive a ballot in the mail?

If you are a registered voter in a mail ballot precinct and do not receive a ballot in the mail at least 2-3 weeks before the election, you should contact the Douglas County Auditor-Treasurer at (320) 762-3077 and they will determine when your ballot was mailed and mark that ballot record as “spoiled/lost” to ensure the ballot will be rejected if it is ever returned. A replacement ballot will then be issued and mailed to you – or you can vote by absentee ballot either in-person or by applying online at www.mnvotes.org to have the ballot mailed to you.

Will instructions be included with the ballot I receive in the mail?

Yes, very detailed instructions and return envelopes will be included with the ballot. The return/signature envelope will require the voter to sign the back of the envelope in front of a witness. The witness can be any registered voter in Minnesota or a notary public. The witness must also sign the signature envelope before it can be accepted by the county auditor.

I understand that a witness is required to also sign my return signature envelope. What if I don't live with anyone else – who can serve as my witness?

Any registered voter in the state of Minnesota can serve as your witness. If you're concerned about COVID-19, adhere to social distancing and wear a mask when you request a registered voter from outside your home to serve as your witness. If you prefer, you may bring your mail ballot to the County Auditor-Treasurer's Office and they'll gladly serve as your witness. Call to make an appointment if the county offices are still closed to the public due to COVID-19.

Where/Who do I return my ballot to?

All mail ballots MUST be returned to the Douglas County Auditor-Treasurer, 305 8th Ave W, Alexandria, MN 56308. A postage-paid envelope will be provided with your ballot. If you prefer not to mail it back, you (or a designated agent) may drop off your ballot in-person or through the use of our secure drop box located near the South entrance to the courthouse building. To be counted, a ballot must be received by the county auditor before 8PM election day.

Can I deliver my voted mail ballot to my local city/township Clerk's office? *No.*

Can I bring my mail ballot to the polling place and vote on election day? *No.*

All registered voters who receive their ballot in the mail, and choose to vote in that election, MUST vote using the ballot that was mailed to them and MUST return their voted ballot to the Douglas County Auditor-Treasurer at 305 8th Ave W, Alexandria, MN 56308.

If someone is not registered to vote yet or has moved since the last election, how can they become a registered voter and receive a ballot in the mail?

Persons that are not registered to vote, or who need to update their registration, should do so ASAP. The deadline to register prior to the August Primary Election is July 21, 2020. The deadline to register prior to the November General Election is October 13, 2020. Otherwise they can request an Absentee Ballot through the county auditor's office or online at www.mnvotes.org by selecting "Other Ways To Vote."

What if someone moves into our precinct after the deadline to pre-register and is not registered to vote by election day – how do they vote?

Non-registered voters in mail ballot precincts can register & vote on election day at the designated mail ballot polling place: (former) First Lutheran Church, 822 Douglas St, Alexandria (use the West entrance from the Cedar Street parking lot).

What if I get my mail at a different address than what is associated with my voter registration record (i.e. PO Box address)?

The "mail ballot" can only be mailed to a voter's residence address through the use of non-forwardable mail. If a voter wishes to receive their ballot at a different address, they must request an absentee ballot instead. The most efficient way to request an absentee ballot is to do so online at www.mnvotes.org by selecting 'Other Ways to Vote.'

If I plan to move before election day, do I still use the ballot that was mailed to me?

No. The ballot that was mailed to you can only be linked to the person/address that it was mailed to. If you move (or change your name) you must re-register to vote and apply for an absentee ballot or vote in that precinct's polling place.

If I normally go South for the winter prior to the November General Election, should I still request an absentee ballot?

That all depends on if you go South before or after receiving the "mail ballot" in the mail. If you head South before receiving your "mail ballot" in the mail, you will need to request an absentee ballot. If you head South after you have already received your "mail ballot" in the mail, you may take your mail ballot with you and return it at your convenience, so long as it is received by the county auditor no later than 8PM on election day.

How do I know that mail balloting is secure, and that voter fraud will be prevented?

The county auditor utilizes the same statewide voter system that is used to track absentee ballots and mail ballots alike. All ballots are tracked as to when they are mailed, received, accepted or rejected. Each voter is only allowed one 'accepted' ballot. In order for an absentee/mail ballot to be accepted, the return signature envelope must be signed by the voter it was issued to, and it also must be witnessed/signed by another registered voter in the state of Minnesota or a notary public.

Will I be voting by mail ballot for all elections from this point forward?

That depends entirely on what your city or township decides is best for the municipality. Some may decide to continue with mail voting for state/county elections while others may decide to revoke it after the 2020 election cycle is completed. If the city/township board chooses to return to voting in-person at the normal polling place, you will receive a notice of polling place change at least 25 days before the next election. If they decide to continue mail balloting, you will receive another mail ballot notification prior to the next state/county election.

<p>Douglas County Auditor-Treasurer 305 8th Ave W, Alexandria MN 56308 Phone: (320) 762-3077 Email: elections@co.douglas.mn.us</p>
--