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THE ISSUE

Voting machines are among the most tightly controlled and closely monitored equipment in use today. Distrust often stems from misunderstandings — or deliberate misinformation — about how they work. From pre-election testing to post-election audits, every step is checked and double-checked, usually by bipartisan teams of election officials.

THE FACTS

Voting equipment involves multiple, overlapping layers of security safeguards.

- **Voting and tabulation machines aren't connected to the internet.** Air-gapped networks ensure that voting and tabulation machines are not connected to the public internet, which sharply reduces the possibility of tampering. We'll say it again for the cheap seats: *Election equipment is not connected to the internet.*
- **Paper ballots provide physical backups.** Most jurisdictions use voter-verifiable paper ballots, which lets voters confirm their choices and provides a reliable physical backup for audits and recounts. Even jurisdictions that offer voting on digital equipment (for example, a device for visually impaired voters) typically issue a paper receipt.
- **Logic and accuracy testing ensures that tabulators are counting correctly.** Before and after each election, officials test machines with sample ballots to ensure that they are tabulating races correctly. These tests are often monitored by political party representatives, who sometimes even participate directly in the ballot counting and marking process, and usually must sign certificates of completion.
- **Physical access to the equipment is tightly controlled.** Voting equipment is stored in locked, monitored locations with limited access and plentiful surveillance. While not in use, equipment is physically sealed with barcoded or numerically stamped tamper-evident seals that can only be broken in the presence of a bipartisan team.
- **Strict chain of custody protocols are non-negotiable.** Every handoff of election equipment is tracked and logged by bipartisan teams to document who accessed them, when, and why.
- **Post-election audits.** Many jurisdictions double-check results after the election by comparing machine counts with paper records.

BOTTOM LINE

Election equipment is heavily tested, controlled, and checked for accuracy. Much of the public distrust comes from confusion or false claims about how they operate and what kind of protections are in place. These machines go through strict testing before the election and careful audits afterward, with bipartisan teams watching every step.

For additional resources or to talk to an expert, please contact Dan Rafter at dan@responsivegov.org.