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Milwaukee Election Commission Statement on August 11, 2026 Election Results Delay

On Tuesday, August 11, Wisconsin held its primary election. The Milwaukee Election Commission (MEC) experienced a one-hour delay in reporting **that did not impact the election results**. In response to media inquiries, MEC is outlining what happened in the Q&A below.

What happened?

At the conclusion of the City of Milwaukee's count of absentee ballots, elections staff are responsible for downloading results from nine tabulator machines onto nine secure flash drives. Those flash drives are then securely transported to the Milwaukee County Courthouse, where results are uploaded and reported.

On election night, election staff mistakenly downloaded audit logs rather than the election results from five of the tabulator machines. Once the downloading error was identified, election staff retrieved the full election results and conveyed them to the County Courthouse. This retrieval process caused an approximately one-hour delay in the reporting of election results.

Did this impact any votes or the accuracy of the election?

No. The issue delayed the reporting of Milwaukee's results, **but it did not affect the results**.

The election results remained intact and unchanged on the tabulators. No ballots were lost or changed, or needed to be recounted or retabulated.

How was the error identified?

The error was identified as early as possible in the process. When Milwaukee County Courthouse staff attempted to access the results files, they found that five flash drives contained audit logs rather than the complete results files. The error could not be caught sooner by MEC staff because, to maintain security, all material downloaded from the tabulators are encrypted and can only be opened by the Milwaukee County Election Commission at the County Courthouse. There is no opportunity for MEC staff to double-check or verify the contents of the flash drives.

What action did MEC take to address the issue?

After communicating with the public what had occurred, MEC staff returned to Central Count, where absentee ballots are counted and maintained, with members of the bipartisan Board of Election Commissioners and a Milwaukee Police Department escort. They downloaded the full results and securely transported them back to the County Courthouse.

As an additional layer of verification, MEC compared the first report detailing ballot totals by ward with the final version to ensure the two totals were identical. Media was present during this process to view both reports. Once the results files from all tabulators were uploaded, the County Clerk posted all of the results from the absentee ballots.

What is an audit log?

An audit log is a record generated by the tabulator that documents activity and events that occur on the machine. It is part of the election record. It is not the file containing election results. An audit log is one important safeguard to ensure the integrity and verifiability of the election process.

What other safeguards are already in place to ensure election integrity?

Multiple, independent safeguards ensure election integrity, from credential-controlled access to election equipment, to the presence of bipartisan observers, to overlapping checks and reconciliations at multiple stages. Each safeguard reinforces the others, preventing a single error from affecting the final outcome. Those safeguards were on display last night, working as intended to identify the issue and ensure it was promptly addressed with no effect on the results.

What happens next?

MEC regularly reviews its election protocols and will continue to do so, including to determine whether any current procedures, staffing, or other practices should be adjusted in advance of the November election.

Milwaukee voters should remain confident that elections in our city are administered fairly, transparently, securely, and in accordance with the law.

Media Availability

MEC staff are now focused on required post-election responsibilities, including reconciliation, canvass preparation and other time-sensitive election administration duties. MEC will not be conducting additional interviews on this matter over the next several days. This statement is intended to address the questions MEC has received to date. Additional questions may be submitted to voterinfo@milwaukee.gov, and MEC will provide additional information as appropriate.