

How does the RCV tabulation process work?

After Election Day concludes, the municipal clerks in each town and city in Maine have two days to submit their unofficial election results to the Secretary of State's Office, per Maine law. As those results begin to come in, the Secretary of State will confer with the Deputy Secretary in charge of the Elections Division to determine whether it appears there will be a winner in each RCV race.

To win the race outright, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the first-choice votes as counted on Election Night. If no candidate appears to have achieved this, based on initial unofficial results reports from the municipalities, the Secretary of State will make the determination to proceed with the ranked-choice voting tabulation(s).

The Secretary will advise the contracted courier service to begin collection of election materials from all of the affected municipalities as soon as possible after the election. In towns and cities that use tabulator devices to count the ballots, the courier will pick up the associated memory devices in sealed packages. In those towns that hand-count their ballots, the courier will pick up the actual ballots, which are transported in the official metal ballot boxes, with locks and serialized tamper-proof seals.

All of these voting materials, representing the votes cast by every Maine voter, will be delivered to a central tabulation site in Augusta, where they will once again be securely stored for the RCV tabulation process, in a locked room with very limited access for certain staff members of the Elections Division. The processing area, likewise, is secured for staff access only. In addition to physical security, neither the computers nor the ballot tabulator device are networked or enabled for Internet access.

Beginning soon after the election, the RCV tabulation process will begin. This is a public proceeding open for observation to interested parties. Staff work during regular business hours on the tabulation processing. Elections staff will process all the election materials, which includes:

- Unlocking and unsealing each ballot box and loading all the ballots into the high-speed tabulator
- Unsealing and uploading all the memory devices
- Hand-entering any ballots that the tabulator cannot process

Results tabulation will be subject to the expediency of the ballot/memory device collection and staff processing time. While the time required to complete the process is difficult to ascertain, a statewide RCV tabulation can take 1.5 to 2 weeks, approximately.

When this work is complete, all the vote data is loaded into the results program on an unconnected computer and the RCV tabulation software applies the rules, per Maine law, to determine the election result. The Secretary of State will make a public announcement two hours before running the actual tabulation to alert any members of the press and public who may want to be present.

As a rule, the Elections Division does not share election results until they are official and certified, signed by the governor up to 20 days after the election. However, in the interest of maintaining an open process during the tabulation of the ranked-choice voting races, the office will share the *unofficial* results of the ranked-choice voting rounds, including which candidate was eliminated in each round, and how those votes were redistributed to other candidates (or other final disposition including overvotes, exhausted ballots, etc.) Keep in mind that these results may be updated during the certification process, if any upload or data entry errors are discovered during the accuracy review, after the initial tabulation is complete.

As always, official results for all races will be available and posted 20 days after the election as Excel files on the [Election Results page](#). For each election, the Secretary will make a public announcement of which races will require the RCV tabulation process, with information about the location and time when the work will begin. Visit the [Maine Department of the Secretary of State News page](#) for the latest press releases from the department.