



What is a risk-limiting audit (RLA)?

"A risk-limiting audit is a post-election tabulation audit that uses a random sample of voted ballots to manually examine for evidence that the originally reported outcome is correct." –Jennifer Morrell, [The Elections Group](#)

Here in Virginia, voters cast their votes on paper ballots. These paper ballots produce an audit trail and makes conducting a risk-limiting audit (RLA) possible. The simplest RLA is a full hand count of every voted ballot. However, a full hand count is extremely time consuming and expensive for a locality to conduct. A RLA is a fast and accurate method for performing an audit using statistical sampling. The Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) is working with [VotingWorks](#), a consulting firm who supports states with election-related audits, to assist with Virginia’s General Election 2020 RLA.

Why is Virginia doing a statewide RLA?

The Code of Virginia states that ELECT shall coordinate post-election [risk-limiting audits annually of ballot scanner machines](#). While ELECT is responsible for coordinating the RLAs, it is the responsibility of the local general registrars and Electoral Boards to conduct the RLAs, and to submit the results of their audit to ELECT. At the conclusion of the audit, ELECT will submit a report of the audited election results to the Virginia State Board of Elections, including a detailed description of any discrepancies.

How can the public be sure that a risk-limiting audit is legitimate?

A RLA allows for observers to participate. It produces data for the public. It also allows the audit results to be verified independently.

Schedule of Virginia’s Risk-Limiting Audit

With the exception of local ballot retrieval meetings, the following activities will be recorded and made available on the [ELECT’s YouTube channel](#) after the conclusion of the audit.

February 16, 2021, 10 AM: Kick Off Meeting for General Registrars, Electoral Board Members, ELECT Staff and VotingWorks.

February 22, 2021, 3 PM: Random seed number generation & ballot selection.

February 23 to February 26, 2021: Localities schedule their ballot retrieval meetings. All localities must have the results of the ballots pulled by February 26th. To find out when a particular locality will have their meeting, [lookup and contact the general registrar for that locality](#).

March 2, 2021, 11:30 AM: Final Audit Results Meeting.