

Optical Scan/ Hand Sanitizer WARNING!

If you plan to offer information regarding the use of hand sanitizers at voting precincts, I offer the following suggestion. Never let a voter use hand sanitizer just before they are handed a ballot. In 2009, amid the flu epidemic and concern for minimizing the spread of germs, we sent hand sanitizer out to each voting precinct. A voter dispensed a big dollop on her hands just before she was given her ballot. Her ballot became damp from the sanitizer product left on her hands which in turn became jammed in the optical scan machine when she deposited it. Not only did it jam to the point that we could not readily remove the ballot, it tore into pieces that got into other parts of the machine. In spite of waiting for the residue to evaporate and attempting to remove the remains of the ballot, the machine was down for the rest of the day. Only 15 minutes before the close of the polls, the technicians were finally able to clear the slot. The machine had to be sent off for repair and cleaning.

Problems have been seen whenever the card stock that ballots are printed on become damp for any reason. We even caution our officers on rainy elections to ensure voters dry their hands well before handling a ballot.

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