

Mitchell County participates in election readiness exercises with U.S. Homeland Security

Osage – Mitchell County Deputy Auditor Rachel Foster and county staff members Lindsay Uhlenhopp, Raina Roll, Kris Olson and Sammi Scharper joined officials from across Iowa to participate in election preparedness exercises conducted by Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) on Thursday. The Iowa Elections Cyber Tabletop Exercise tested each county's incident response plan for the 2020 general election.

Each participant tackled simulations of various scenarios exploring impacts to voter confidence, voting operations, and the integrity of elections.

"As election managers, we have to prepare for the worst, and hope for the best," Secretary Pate said. "This was an important exercise to help counties identify best practices and areas for improvement. Election cybersecurity requires a team effort, and we all have to be united on that team, at the county, state and federal levels."

More than 100 county and state officials participated in Thursday's exercise.

"CISA has been working side-by-side with Secretary Pate and local officials around Iowa for more than three years to prepare for the 2020 elections, and today's exercise gave us an opportunity to finetune processes and incident response plans before voters head to the polls," said CISA Senior Cybersecurity Advisor Matt Masterson. "Voters have a role to play in securing our elections too, particularly during COVID, and they can do that by focusing on being a '3-P voter' – prepared, participating, and patient. That means make a plan today for how you're going to vote, sign up to be a poll worker if you're healthy and able, and remember that everything may take a little longer this year, including reporting the results."

Voters should look to trusted sources, such as county and state officials, for election information.