



How a Voting System Becomes EAC Certified: Overview of the EAC Certification Process

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 created the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), an independent, bipartisan commission charged with adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, accrediting testing laboratories, and certifying voting systems, among other important responsibilities. In furtherance of this mission, the EAC established a Testing and Certification Program which assists state and local election officials by providing voting machine testing and certification. This Overview of the EAC Certification Process provides the basic steps taken by a voting system to receive EAC certification.

1. The EAC Adopts Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG)

The Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) are a set of requirements that voting systems must meet in order to receive a certification from the EAC. VVSG 2.0, the most recent version of the guidelines, was adopted by the EAC in February 2021. Voting systems may be tested to any version of the VVSG, in accordance with the EAC's VVSG Lifecycle Policy, adopted in April 2022.

2. NIST Recommends and the EAC Accredits Voting System Test Laboratories

The EAC accredits independent voting system test laboratories (VSTLs) that evaluate voting systems against the VVSG to determine if they conform to all applicable program requirements. 52 U.S. Code § 20971(b) covers laboratory accreditation, which begins with the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) providing a recommendation to the EAC on laboratories to accredit following an evaluation. Chapter 5 of the Voting System Test Laboratory Manual (Version 2.0) describes the EAC VSTL accreditation revocation process.

The VSTL Certificate of Accreditation that is issued after the EAC performs a VSTL audit and the expiration date listed on the certificate relates to the EAC program requirement to reassess VSTLs periodically to ensure conformance to the requirements of the testing and certification program for a VSTL. Failure to issue an updated VSTL Certificate of Accreditation does not indicate the lab is no longer accredited, which can only occur by a vote of the Commission pursuant to 52 U.S. Code § 20971(c)(2). During periods where the Commission lacked quorum, accreditation certificates were not issued.

3. A Voting System Meets Requirements of the VVSG

A voting system receives EAC certification when the system has been tested by a federally accredited voting system test laboratory (VSTL) and has successfully met the requirements of the VVSG and any other claims made by the voting system manufacturer.

4. The EAC Certifies the Voting System

The EAC issues a certification once all steps required by the program have been completed. EAC certification of a voting system does not expire, and a system can only lose its certification if the EAC formally decertifies it.