

721—21.359(53) Processing absentee ballots before election day. Only when the voters have been provided with secrecy envelopes may the commissioner direct the special precinct board to open affidavit envelopes on the day before election day.

21.359(1) The secrecy envelope shall be closed on at least two sides and shall completely cover the ballot. The envelope shall have the following message printed on it using at least 24-point type:

<p>Secrecy Envelope After you vote, put your ballot in here.</p>

21.359(2) The special precinct board shall review voters' affidavits and applications to determine which ballots will be accepted for counting and prepare the notices to those voters whose ballots have been rejected. The affidavit envelopes containing ballots that will not be counted and the applications submitted for those ballots shall be stored in a secure location.

21.359(3) The affidavit envelopes containing the ballots that will be counted shall be stacked with the affidavits facing down. The envelopes shall be opened and the secrecy envelope containing the ballot shall be removed. The affidavit envelope and application shall be stored together.

21.359(4) If a voter has not enclosed the ballot in a secrecy envelope and the ballot has not been folded in a manner that conceals all votes marked on the ballot, the officials shall put the ballot in a secrecy envelope without examining the ballot. Two of the special precinct election officials, one from each of the political parties referred to in Iowa Code section 49.13(2), shall sign the secrecy envelope.

21.359(5) The following security procedures shall be followed:

a. The process shall be witnessed by observers appointed by the county chairperson of each of the political parties referred to in Iowa Code section 49.13, subsection 2.

b. No ballots shall be counted or examined before election day.

c. The number of secrecy envelopes shall be recorded before the ballots are stored and the number shall be verified before any ballots are removed from the envelopes on election day. The ballots may be bundled and sealed in groups of a specified number to make counting easier.

This rule is intended to implement 1997 Iowa Acts, House File 636, section 73.