

VOTING THROUGH POSTAL BALLOT BY ABSENTEE VOTERS



**ELECTION COMMISSION OF
INDIA, NEW DELHI.**

POSTAL BALLOT



- Following categories of Absentee voters, in pursuance of the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules, 2019, and the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules, 2020 read with the Election Commission's **decision dated 16th July, 2020** have been given the facility of voting through postal ballot (P.B) paper :

Absentee Voters :

- Senior citizens (above 80 years of age),
- Persons with disability flagged in the electoral roll and
- COVID 19 suspect or affected persons.

PROCESS FOR APPLYING FOR P.B BY ABSENTEE VOTER

An Absentee Voter wishing to vote by postal ballot has to make application to R.O in **Form-12D**, giving all requisite particulars. Such application should reach R.O during the period **from date of announcement of Election till five days following the date of notification.**

Rule 27 E and 27-I of C.E.Rules-1961- Issue of Postal ballot paper to the absentee voter and return of the ballot paper after voting shall be directed by ECI. Accordingly, ECI has laid down procedure/guidelines

PROCESS FOR APPLYING P.B BY ABSENTEE VOTERS



If any elector at the time of election is **hospitalized** on account of COVID-19 in a hospital within the State or is in **Home/ Institutional Quarantine** on account of COVID-19 and not in a position to cast vote in person at the polling station as per medical advice and if such elector makes request for issue of Postal Ballot, the RO concerned, on being satisfied about the genuineness of the application, shall provide the postal ballot to the elector.

The RO shall make arrangement **in coordination with the Nodal Officer** for COVID-19, designated by the Chief Secretary, on the directions of the Election Commission. Application for postal ballot paper from such electors (Form 12D) should be accompanied by **copy of certificate/ instructions from competent health authorities.**

In case of absentee voters belonging to PWD category (AVPD), who opt for postal ballot, application **Form 12D should be accompanied by a copy of benchmark disability certificate** specified by the concerned appropriate Government, under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

FORM 12D
[See rule 27-C]
PART I

Letter of intimation to Assistant Returning Officer
(for absentee voters)

The Assistant Returning Officer,
(For the notified class of electors)

..... Parliamentary/Assembly constituency
..... (Designation and address of ARO)

.....son/daughter/wife.....of.....resident.....of.....
.....village/mohalla.....Town/city/tehsil.....District.....(State) belong to the class of absentee voter and wish to cast my vote by post at the
..... of the People/Legislative Assembly from theParliamentary/Assembly constituency.

Complete present postal address is as under:-

.....dwelling unit/tent number.....

.....mohalla/village.....

.....Town/tehsil.....

.....

.....PIN CODE.....

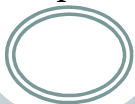
.....Phone No. (if available).....

.....I am entered at serial number.....in part No.....of the electoral roll for.....Parliamentary/Assembly constituency

.....working as.....(designation of the office held) in.....

.....and full address of organization).

on duty in the above-mentioned office on the day of poll for the above-mentioned election.
unt of my official duties on the date of poll, I will not be in a position to be present in the polling station assigned to me on the day of poll.



.....years of age/am a person with disability, and am not in a position to go to the polling station to cast vote.
ested that postal ballot paper may be issued to me as absentee voter for the above election.

Yours faithfully,

.....

(Full name and signature)

PART II

(for absentee voters other than senior citizen or persons with disability)

e by the nodal officer appointed by the Organization concerned.

by certified that the particulars given by the applicant in Part I are correct, and it is further certified that the applicant will be on official duty on the day
he will not be in a position to be present in the polling station on the day of poll.

.....

(full signature of the attesting Officer)

.....(Name)

.....(address)

.....(rubber stamp)

ff whichever is not applicable and tick the relevant statement.

his Application must reach RO within 5 days following the date of notification of election.

ACTION BY R.O.

Distribution of Form 12 D by BLO:

BLO will visit to the houses of the absentee voters in category of AVSC, AVFC and AVCO as per details provided by the RO in the Polling Station area and deliver Form 12D to the concerned electors and obtain acknowledgements from them.

BLO shall deposit all the Acknowledgements obtained from the electors with the RO.

If an elector is not available, BLO will share his/her contact details and revisit to collect it within five days of the notification.

The elector may or may not opt for Postal Ballot. If he/she opts for Postal Ballot then the BLO will collect the filled-in-Form 12D and deposit with the RO forthwith.

lector Officer shall supervise the process of distribution and collection of Form 12D by BLOs under the overall supervision of RO.

ACTION BY R.O



On receipt of application in Form-12D, the RO will draw a **list (format as Annexure-1) of Absentee Voters** in the 3 categories, i.e. (a) 'AVSC', (b)AVPD and (c) AVCO, whose applications have been received in time and are in order.

On the last date for making nominations for the election, the electoral roll is frozen. At this stage, RO shall verify and ensure that the applicants for postal ballots are registered as Electors and the **electoral particulars given in their application Forms-12-D are correct with reference to the existing electoral roll.**

All the electors, whose particulars with reference to the electoral roll have been found to be correct, shall be issued postal ballot paper as Absentee Voters in the category of AVSC and AVPD. In case of AVCO, before issuing FORM 12 D, the RO shall check certificate of competent authority duly appointed by the State Government/UT to the effect that the elector is under home quarantine or institutional quarantine due to COVID-19.

ACTION BY R.O.

The R.O shall **mark 'P.B' in the marked copy** of the Electoral Roll, against the names of such Absentee electors, to show that a postal ballot paper has been issued to them, (However, he shouldn't record therein, the sl. no. of the ballot papers issued to them)

The RO shall also ensure that elector **issued with postal ballot is not allowed** to vote at a polling station.

Further, R.O shall **share list** of all such PwD and 80+ electors, whose applications in Form 12D for availing Postal Ballot facility have been approved by him, with the Contesting Candidates of recognized political parties in printed hardcopy

FORM AND DESIGN OF POSTAL BALLOT PAPER



The postal ballot paper for Absentee Voters shall be of the **same Form and language as the postal ballot paper for the voters on Election duty**. In this connection, reference is invited to the Commission's Directions No. 52/2015/SDR/Vol.1 dated 18th September, 2015 and 52/2016/SDR/Vol.1 dated 24th February, 2016.

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

Separate teams of Poll officers, comprising **two officials** (out of which at least one should be not below the rank/level of the official appointed as polling officer)

Number of Polling teams of - depend on the number of Absentee Voters

The team of polling officials shall visit the electors **at the address mentioned in their applications**

The electors will be intimated, **in advance, about the date** and approximate time of visit of poll officials - through SMS on the mobile number mentioned in the application/ in Form-12D. In other cases - by post and /or through the BLO.

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

If the elector is not present at the first visit, the team shall **pay a second** visit after leaving intimation. If the elector is not present even at the second visit, no further visit.

The **candidates shall be informed about the schedule** of visit for the delivery and collection of postal ballots for this category. They may, desired, **depute their authorized** representatives, including BLAs (with prior intimation to R.Os) to watch the process.

The **list of AVSCs, AVPDs and AVCOs** shall be divided for distribution among the **different teams** of Polling Officials in such manner that each team gets a list of persons in geographically compact area.

The visiting polling official shall **ascertain the identity** of the elector before issuing postal ballot paper.

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

Name of elector and the **document produced** for identification shall also be entered in a register (**Annexure-2**) to be maintained for the purpose, and **signature/thumb impression** of the elector obtained therein. Further, a **tick mark** shall be placed against the name of the elector in the list of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO to indicate that the person has voted.

The **counterfoil** with the serial number and part number of elector duly filled up shall be got detached and kept in safe custody by the team.

It shall be the responsibility of each team of polling officials to (a) **Issue** postal ballot to each of the Absentee Voter (b) **Brief** the elector about the procedure to be followed for voting through postal ballot, (c) Make sure that the elector votes without anyone **influencing** his/her choice, and (d) Ensure the **secrecy** of voting. However, if an elector is not able to cast vote by himself due to blindness or **physical infirmity**, he/she shall be allowed to take the assistance of any adult person for casting vote.

Annexure-1



List of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO electors entitled to vote through postal ballot

Name of Election: -----

Name of Constituency: -----

Sl. No	Name of Elector	Part Number	Sl. Number in the Part	EPIC Number

Signature of RO

Date:

Annexure-II



List of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO electors issued with postal ballot

Name of Election: -----

Name of Constituency: -----

Sl. No	Name of Elector	SI. No. in the list of AVSC/AVPD electors	Document produced for identification	Date on Which voted	Signature/Thumb impression of elector

Signature of Poll Officer Name:

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

While briefing explain the following points to them :

Making the **declaration** in Form 13A and getting it attested by the poll officer himself,

Entering the serial number of postal ballot paper, both on Form 13A and on the smaller envelope (Form 13B)

Manner of **marking vote**, i.e by placing either cross mark or tick mark against the name of the candidate of choice,

Folding and placing the marked ballot in the smaller envelope and closing the envelope,

Placing the declaration in form 13A, duly filled up, signed and attested along with closed envelope (Form 13B) containing the marked ballot paper **inside the larger envelope (Form 13C)**,

Closing the larger envelope and **handing over** the same to the poll officer.

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

Poll officer is authorized to attest the declaration in Form 13A in the case of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO. While attesting the declaration, the poll officer shall write his full name and also the designation 'Poll Officer'. In the case of a COVID affected person on treatment **in Hospital, the Medical Officer** attending to the person also authorized to attest the declaration.

After vote is cast on postal ballot and the envelope in Form 13C is ready, the Poll Officials will collect the same.

Each Polling Team should be provided with the list of AVSC/ AVPD/ AVCO electors, adequate number of postal ballot papers, envelopes, pen, ink-pad (for thumb impression wherever required), glue stick for closing the envelopes, a sufficiently big canvas bag for keeping the envelopes and polled ballots and the counterfoils

VISITS OF POLLING OFFICIALS, BRIEFING OF ELECTORS AND COLLECTION OF MARKED BALLOT PAPERS

Instruction of ECI vide letter No.52 / 2021 / SDR / Vol-I dated 08.03.2021: A **Micro Observer** will also accompany the above said team of Polling Officers.

Police Security cover shall be provided to the poll officers for their visits.

Arrangement for **videography** of the proceedings without exposing the secrecy of vote

Visits by teams of poll officers to be planned in such a way that the same is completed **one day prior** to the date fixed for poll.

Appropriate protection equipment including PPE kit - For the poll officers deputed to AVCO electors - It should be done in consultation with the Nodal Health Officer for AVCOs.

DEPOSIT OF ENVELOPES CONTAINING MARKED BALLOT PAPERS AND COUNTERFOILS

At the end of each day of visit by poll officers to the address of AVSC/AVPD/AVCO electors, the envelopes in **Form-13C** containing postmarked ballot paper etc. and the **counterfoils** of ballot papers containing the signature/thumb impression of electors and other particulars, shall be **collected by the ARO designated** of postal voting by the absentee voters. The ARO shall make arrangements to have the same **delivered at the headquarters of the RO** for keeping them in safe custody. The ARO shall **maintain the record** indicating the number of ballots sent on each day. This should also be shared with the RO on a daily basis.

Contesting **candidates** will be duly informed about the Election Commission's **above guidelines**.

**REPORTING ON POSTAL BALLOT
(ECI LETTER NO.52 / 2021 / SDR / VOL-I DATED 17TH MARCH 2021)**



Annexure-I: Statement of Postal Ballot in the category of Absentee Voters-
To be sent by RO to the CEO.

Annexure-II: Compiled statement of Postal ballots in the category of
Absentee Voters - To be sent by CEO to ECI

CARRYING OF MOBILE PHONES INSIDE COUNTING HALL

- **MOBILE OF R.O./A.R.O./COUNTING SUPERVISOR LINKED TO ETPBS SHOULD BE BROUGHT INSIDE THE COUNTING HALL**
- **THE HANDSET SHALL ONLY BE SWITCHED ON TO RECEIVE OTP, AFTER WHICH IT SHOULD BE SWITCHED OFF IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ETPBS OF THE COMPUTER IS LOGGED ON**
- **SUCH HANDSET IS TO BE KEPT IN THE CUSTODY OF ARO / RO OBSERVER WHO SO OVER IS THE SENIOR MOST, IN THE COUNTING HALL FOR ETPBS COUNTING**
- **IN CASE THE LOGIN IS CLOSED, TO OBTAIN THE OTP AGAIN, THE MOBILE AGAIN CAN BE SWITCHED ON**
- **SPECIFIC PERMISSION BE SOUGHT FROM CEO FOR NUMBER OF USERS IN EACH CASE WITH THE REQUISITE MOBILE PHONE NUMBERS BEING USED.**

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q-1 Who is entitled to avail facility of voting through postal ballot?

Ans. In pursuance of the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules, 2019, and the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules, 2020 read with the Election Commission's decision dated 16th July, 2020, the following categories of Absentee voters have been given the facility of voting through postal ballot (PB) paper:

- i. Senior citizens (above 80 years of age),
- ii. Persons with disability flagged in the electoral roll database,
- iii. COVID 19 suspect or affected persons, and;
- iv. Persons employed in essential services (In consultation with the Central & State Govt., CEO provide the list of essential services and then Commission issues the Notification)

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q2. What is the Form in which the application for postal ballot by an absentee voter can be made and where one can get copy of that Form ?

The application for postal ballot can be made in Form-12D. The Form can be downloaded from the website of Election Commission (<https://eci.gov.in/files/file/12269-form-12d-letter-intimation-to-assistant-returning-officer-for-absentee-voters/>). Besides, the Booth Level Officers will distribute copy of Form- 12D to absentee voters as per details given by the Returning Officer of the concerned constituency.

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q-3-Which authority issues postal ballot to absentee voters ?

Ans. Returning Officer of the constituency will issue postal ballot on the basis of Form- 1A received from an absentee voter. The elector who has applied for postal ballot and whose particulars are found to be correct in the electoral roll along with other requirements, shall be issued postal ballot paper. The said postal ballot paper will be handed over by the polling officer visiting the residence of absentee voter. The postal ballot paper will not be sent to the absentee voter by any other means. Marking of vote on the postal ballot paper by the absentee voter should be done without any influence.

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



4. What are the conditions which a Person with Disability has to fulfill to avail facility of postal ballot?

Ans. To avail facility of postal ballot paper, a Person with Disability has to fulfill the following conditions:-

He should be flagged as Person with disability (PwD) in the electoral roll database and he needs to submit a copy of benchmark disability certificate issued by appropriate Government along with Form-12D.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

5. When does the Returning Officer mark postal ballot in electoral roll ?

Ans. After last date of Nomination when E.Roll has been freeze, the Returning Officer will draw a list of the absentee voters, whose applications have been received in time and are in order, and that the applicant is already there in the E.Roll; R.O. shall mark PB against the entry of the absentee voters in the electoral roll, whose applications have been approved for him.

6. Is it mandatory for all electors in the categories of absentee voter to vote through postal ballot?

Ans. No. Voting through postal ballot is an optional facility which an absentee voter can opt, if he so wishes. All others, who do not opt for postal ballot, may vote at the polling station concerned.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q7. At what stage, Returning Officer should share information/list of absentee voters in the categories of 80 electors and Persons with Disabilities with the contesting candidates?

Ans. After preparation of marked copy of electoral roll, the Returning Officer shall share list of absentee voters in the categories of senior citizens and persons with disabilities, who have been extended facility of postal ballot with the contesting candidates of recognized political parties, in printed hard copy. Thereafter, all the candidates shall be informed about the schedule of visit for the delivery and collection of postal ballots by the teams of poll officers. They may, if desire, depute their authorized representatives (including BLAs) with prior intimation to the Returning Officer, to watch the process.

Signature/thumb impression of such authorized representatives / Booth Level Agent accompanying the poll officers will be taken in the prescribed attendance sheet.

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q8. Whether an absentee voter in PwD category on the ground of blindness or physical infirmity take assistance of an adult person for marking postal ballot, and if so, what formalities have to be completed by the companion and the polling officer?

Ans. If an absentee voter in P w D category on the ground of blindness or physical infirmity requires assistance of an adult person for marking postal ballot, all the provisions of Rule 49N of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 will be applicable. The companion has to give declaration in the Form prescribed by the Commission and the polling officer shall keep a record of such cases in Form-14A. Assistance of polling agents of candidates or political parties may not be taken. The companion should keep the vote secret and he/she can be acted as the companion of one elector.

FREEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



9. Suppose, application of a COVID-19 affected person for postal ballot has been approved by the Returning Officer, but before issuance of postal ballot by the RO, he has tested COVID-19 negative. Is he eligible to vote at a polling station?

Ans. No. Once the Returning officer has issued a postal ballot paper to an absentee voter on the basis of Form-12D, the said voter cannot vote at polling station in person.

10. The last hour of the poll is for COVID-19 suspected/ affected voters. During the last hour of the poll there may be voters already in the queue. In this case, will the COVID affected/ suspected voters cast their votes after the normal voters in the queue have completed voting?

Ans. Yes, the COVID-19 affected/ suspected voters will cast their votes after the normal voters in the queue have completed voting. They may reach the polling station in the last hour fixed for poll.



THANKS