

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
4 SENATE BILL 158

By: Mann of the Senate

5 and

6 Fetgatter of the House

7

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9 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

10 An Act relating to severe weather tracking; creating  
11 the Oklahoma Emergency Weather Response and Tracking  
12 Regulatory Act of 2025; providing short title;  
13 defining terms; allowing certain entities to hire or  
14 contract with certain persons for severe weather  
15 tracking; establishing requirements for professional  
16 severe weathers; establishing provisions for severe  
17 weather tracking during certain significant weather  
18 events; exempting professional severe weather  
19 trackers from certain traffic regulations under  
20 certain circumstances; providing exceptions to  
21 certain exemptions; construing provision;  
22 establishing penalty; amending 47 O.S. 2021, Section  
23 1-103, which relates to authorized emergency  
24 vehicles; designating certain vehicles as authorized  
emergency vehicles in certain circumstances; amending  
47 O.S. 2021, Section 12-218, which relates to  
distinctive markings of emergency vehicles; providing  
for distinctive markings for primary vehicles of  
professional severe weather trackers; updating  
statutory language; providing for codification;  
providing an effective date; and declaring an  
emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

1 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-300 of Title 47, unless there  
3 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma  
5 Emergency Weather Response and Tracking Regulatory Act of 2025".

6 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
7 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-301 of Title 47, unless there  
8 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

9 As used in this act:

10 1. "Professional severe weather tracker" means an individual  
11 hired by or contracted with a qualified media outlet or affiliated  
12 with a research program at a qualified institution of higher  
13 education;

14 2. "Qualified media outlet" means a television or radio  
15 broadcasting station licensed by the Federal Communications  
16 Commission for the broadcast or transmission of programming via  
17 broadcast, cable, streaming, or other platforms as recognized by the  
18 Federal Communications Commission;

19 3. "Qualified institution of higher education" means any  
20 college or university overseen by the Oklahoma State Regents for  
21 Higher Education that offers a course or program in meteorology; and

22 4. "Significant weather event" means:

23 a. a day of enhanced, moderate, or high-risk conditions  
24 in one or more counties in this state predicted by the

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's  
National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center,
- b. any tornado or severe thunderstorm watch in one or  
more counties in this state issued by the National  
Weather Service or a qualified media outlet,
- c. any storm in one or more counties in this state, or  
anticipated to enter one or more counties in this  
state, for which a tornado or severe thunderstorm  
warning has been issued by the National Weather  
Service or a qualified media outlet,
- d. any blizzard warning, ice storm warning, winter  
weather advisory, winter storm warning, or winter  
storm watch issued by the National Weather Service or  
a qualified media outlet,
- e. a red flag warning issued by the National Weather  
Service or the Forestry Services Division of the  
Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and  
Forestry, or
- f. a flash flood warning or flood warning issued by the  
National Weather Service or a qualified media outlet.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified

in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-302 of Title 47, unless there  
is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1       A. A qualified media outlet or qualified institution of higher  
2 education may hire or contract with not more than five professional  
3 severe weather trackers for the purposes provided for in this act.

4 The qualified media outlet or qualified institution of higher  
5 education shall:

- 6       1. Issue specific identification or credentialing information  
7 to each hired or contracted professional severe weather tracker; and  
8       2. Maintain a list of the names of each hired or contracted  
9 professional severe weather tracker on a publicly available website.

10      B. Any professional severe weather tracker employed by or  
11 contracted with a qualified media outlet or qualified institution of  
12 higher education shall:

13       1. Complete an emergency driving course to be administered by a  
14 law enforcement entity in this state, including, but not limited to,  
15 a municipal police department, a county sheriff office, the Council  
16 on Law Enforcement Education and Training, or the Department of  
17 Public Safety;

18       2. Maintain a liability insurance policy of not less than One  
19 Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00); and

20       3. Maintain in his or her vehicle the identifying or  
21 credentialing information issued by the qualified media outlet or  
22 qualified higher education institution.

1 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified

2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-304 of Title 47, unless there  
3 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. Primary vehicles utilized by a professional severe weather  
5 tracker shall:

6 1. Display markings clearly identifying such vehicle as being  
7 utilized for severe weather tracking and identifying the qualified  
8 media outlet or qualified institution of higher education with which  
9 the tracker is affiliated; and

10 2. Be authorized to be equipped with and to use the visual  
11 signals described in Section 12-218 of Title 47 of the Oklahoma  
12 Statutes.

13 B. Once the conditions of a significant weather event have been  
14 met, a professional severe weather tracker may:

15 1. Activate the visual signals authorized for use in this act;  
16 2. Be considered an authorized emergency vehicle for the  
17 purposes of this act;

18 3. Travel upon roads, highways, and county roads closed by the  
19 Department of Transportation, the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, any  
20 city or county, or any law enforcement agency by reason of  
21 conditions triggered by the significant weather event;

22 4. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only  
23 after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;

1       5. Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as speeding does not  
2 endanger life or property;

3       6. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement; and

4       7. Disregard regulations governing turning in specified  
5 directions.

6       C. The exemptions granted to a professional severe weather  
7 tracker in this section shall apply only when the tracker is  
8 properly and lawfully making use of flashing green and white lights  
9 or a combination of flashing green and white lights meeting the  
10 requirements of Section 12-218 of Title 47 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

11       D. The provisions of this section shall not limit the liability  
12 of a professional severe weather tracker. The provisions of this  
13 section shall not relieve the professional severe weather tracker  
14 from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all  
15 persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the  
16 consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others.

17       E. Nothing in this section shall be construed to exempt a  
18 professional severe weather tracker from obligation to yield right-  
19 of-way and stop for superseding authorized emergency vehicles, as  
20 prescribed in Section 1-103 of Title 47 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

21       SECTION 5.       NEW LAW       A new section of law to be codified  
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-305 of Title 47, unless there  
23 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 Any professional severe weather tracker found to be in violation  
2 of the provisions of this act may be subject to a fine not to exceed  
3 Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00). Such fine shall be in addition to  
4 any criminal or civil penalties the tracker may be subject to for  
5 the violation of the laws of this state.

6 SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
7 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 19-306 of Title 47, unless there  
8 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

9 Nothing in this act shall be construed to prohibit or limit the  
10 rights of any individual to engage in recreational or commercial  
11 storm tracking or chasing.

12 SECTION 7. AMENDATORY 47 O.S. 2021, Section 1-103, is  
13 amended to read as follows:

14 Section 1-103. A. When equipped as prescribed in subsection B  
15 of this section:

16 1. Vehicles of fire departments;

17 2. Ambulances or vehicles specified pursuant to subsection B of  
18 Section 1-2512 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes of licensed  
19 ambulance service providers;

20 3. State vehicles of law enforcement agencies;

21 4. County vehicles of sheriffs and full-time commissioned  
22 deputies and vehicles designated by the sheriff for support of the  
23 sheriff's office including privately owned vehicles driven by the  
24 sheriff and full-time, part-time and reserve commissioned deputies~~,~~

1 provided the audible sirens and flashing red lights equipped on such  
2 privately owned vehicles are used only in a law enforcement capacity  
3 and in the course of duty;

4       5. Municipal vehicles of police departments;

5       6. Vehicles owned and operated by the United States Marshals  
6 Service or the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

7       7. Vehicles of Oklahoma National Guard units designated by the  
8 Adjutant General for support to civil authorities; ~~or~~

9       8. Vehicles owned and operated by any local organization for  
10 emergency management as defined by Section 683.3 of Title 63 of the  
11 Oklahoma Statutes; or

12       9. Primary vehicles of professional severe weather trackers  
13 hired by or contracted with a qualified media outlet or qualified  
14 institution of higher education, as those terms are defined in  
15 Section 2 of this act. Provided, however, such authorized emergency  
16 vehicle designation shall only be provided while the professional  
17 severe weather tracker is tracking a significant weather event, and  
18 professional severe weather trackers shall yield right-of-way and  
19 stop for vehicles described in paragraphs 1 through 8 of this  
20 subsection,

21 are authorized emergency vehicles.

22       B. All Except for primary vehicles of professional severe  
23 weather trackers, all vehicles prescribed in subsection A of this  
24 section shall be equipped with sirens capable of giving audible

1 signals as required by the provisions of Section 12-218 of this  
2 title and flashing ~~red~~ lights as authorized by the provisions of  
3 Section 12-218 of this title.

4 SECTION 8. AMENDATORY 47 O.S. 2021, Section 12-218, is  
5 amended to read as follows:

6 Section 12-218. A. Every authorized emergency vehicle shall,  
7 in addition to any other equipment and distinctive markings required  
8 by this title, be equipped with flashing red or blue lights or a  
9 combination of flashing red and blue lights. The lights shall be  
10 visible at five hundred (500) feet in normal sunlight.

11 B. A law enforcement vehicle when used as an authorized  
12 emergency vehicle may but need not be equipped with ~~alternately-~~  
13 flashing alternately flashing red or blue lights specified herein.  
14 An unmarked vehicle used as a law enforcement vehicle for routine  
15 traffic enforcement shall be equipped with the following combination  
16 of lights:

17 1. Three flashing red, blue, or a combination of red and blue  
18 lights emitting the flashing lights to the front of the vehicle;

19 2. Two flashing white lights emitting the flashing white lights  
20 to the front of the vehicle;

21 3. Flashing red, blue, white or any combination of red, blue or  
22 white lights placed at and emitting the flashing lights from the  
23 four corners of the vehicle so that they are visible for three  
24 hundred sixty (360) degrees; and

1       4. One flashing red, blue, amber, or any combination of red,  
2       blue, or amber lights emitting the flashing light to the rear of the  
3       vehicle.

4       C. A professional severe weather tracker hired by or contracted  
5       with a qualified media outlet or qualified institution of higher  
6       education, as such terms are defined in Section 2 of this act, shall  
7       be equipped with a combination of green and white flashing lights.  
8       The lights shall be visible at five hundred (500) feet in normal  
9       sunlight.

10      D. The use of the signal equipment described herein shall  
11      impose upon drivers of other vehicles the obligation to yield right-  
12      of-way and stop for authorized emergency vehicles, as prescribed in  
13      Section 11-405 of this title.

14      SECTION 9. This act shall become effective July 1, 2025.

15      SECTION 10. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
16      of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby  
17      declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
18      be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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