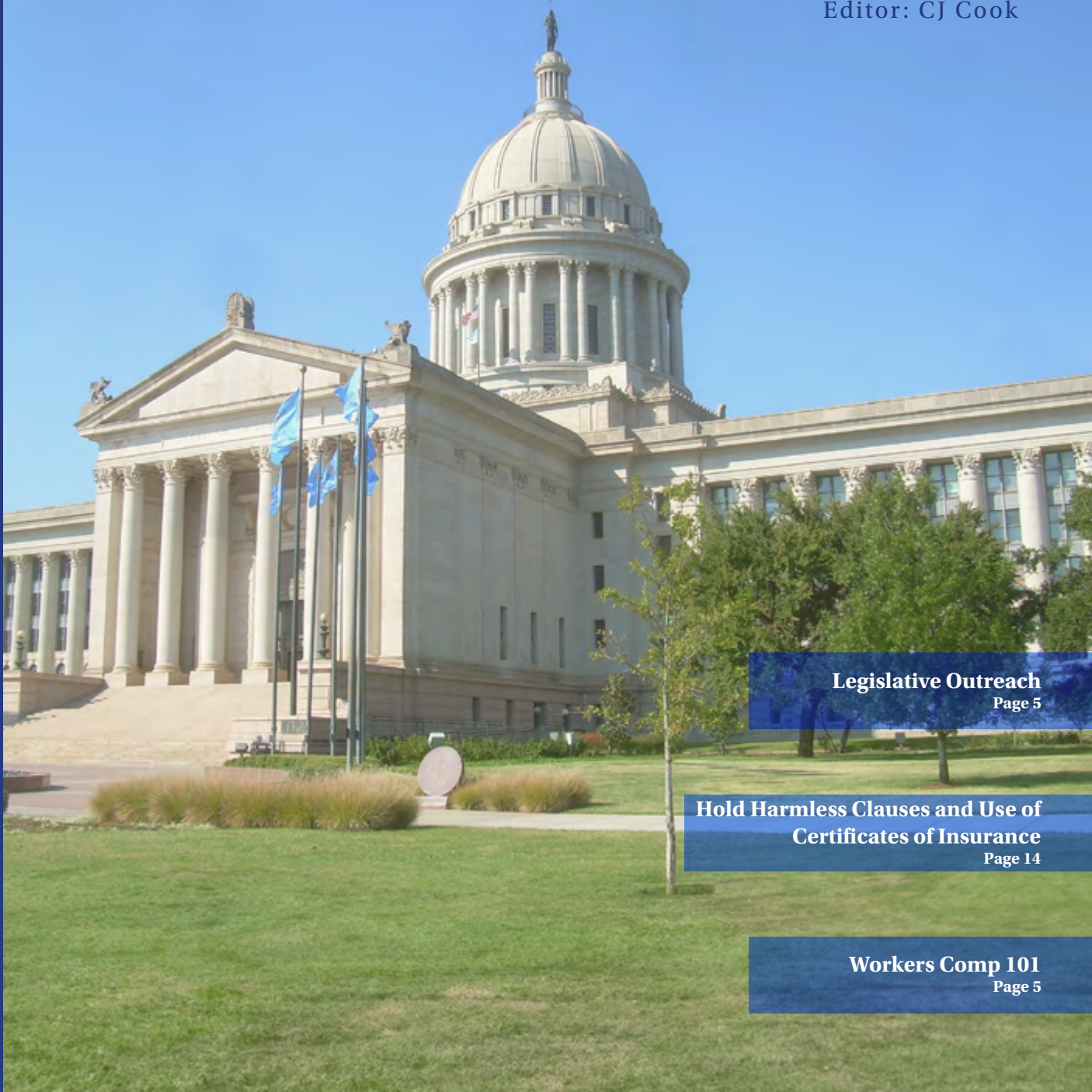


ACCO County CROSSROADS

VOLUME 18
ISSUE 1

Editor: CJ Cook

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024



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Legislative Outreach

Author: Chris Schroder, ACCO Executive Director

Another legislative session has begun, and it kicked off with Governor Stitt's annual state of the state address. In the Governor's address he listed four priorities for his executive budget: defend the taxpayer dollar, protect Oklahomans, modernize government, and promote Oklahoma.

The Governor proposed a flat budget for fiscal year 2025 that includes a 0.25 percentage point individual income tax reduction. The proposed budget for fiscal year 2025 totals \$10.8 billion. The Governor also vowed to sign any tax cut that comes to his desk.

As far as legislation, there were over 2,000 bills filed this session. This number does not include the carryover bills from the last session. ACCO is tracking over 200 of these bills with more sure to be added to the list. The first deadline for bills to be heard in committee is February 29th, so any bill not heard by that point will go dormant for the session.

We held our first Wake-Up Wednesday breakfast on February 7th. This happened to be our annual joint breakfast with CODA in conjunction with their legislative conference. We had a great turnout with approximately 150 people in attendance, including over thirty legislators. Remember, we host this breakfast every Wednesday and would love to have more commissioners attend. If you plan to attend, please invite your legislators.

ACCO is also excited to start our capitol visits. The ACCO board and legislative committee agreed to a new plan this year to increase commissioners' presence at the capitol during the legislative session. The commissioners in each ACCO district are being asked to come to the capitol once this session. It is our hope that a constant presence at the capitol will keep our bills and funding requests at the forefront of legislators' minds.

During the visits, ACCO will provide a handout for each commissioner as well as cards to give to legislators that show some of the bills we support. It is important for commissioners to talk about the successes you are having in your county, CED, COG, or whatever it may be. Legislators need to hear about the positive things happening in your county, not just your needs.

As always, you can continue to follow the weekly legislative email updates of Bill Case or our weekly videos on Facebook. I look forward to a successful session.



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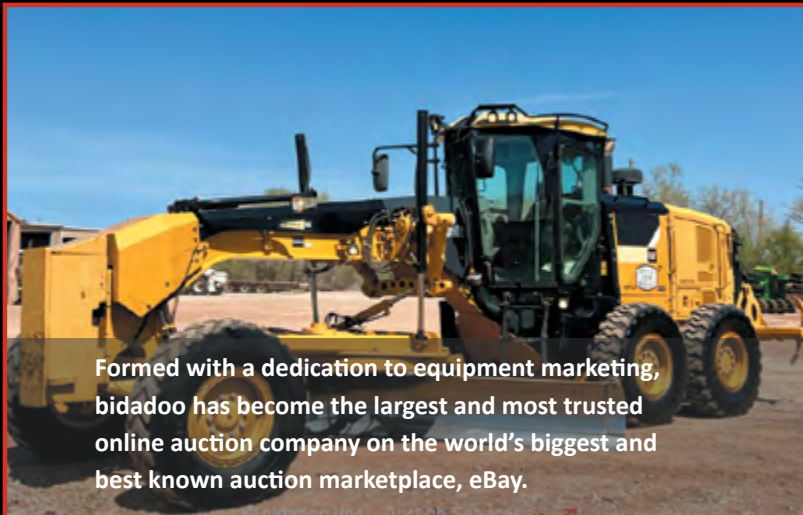
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Maximizing Impact: A Concise Guide to NACo Committee Engagement

Author: Kim Hall, NACo

Active participation in NACo committees is the key to amplifying county influence at the federal level. This article delves into the transformative potential of serving on a NACo committee, highlighting opportunities and benefits for county officials.

With over 1,500 participants, including individuals from 23 of 14 Oklahoma counties, NACo committees cover a diverse range of topics—from arts and culture to veteran affairs. This engagement is not merely about policy but a strategic pathway to secure federal policies and resources for local communities, requiring just one hour of commitment per month.

Applying for a committee is seamless, with the flexibility to join as a member any time during the year. Committee terms run from July to July.

For those aspiring to leadership roles, applications open each spring for Chair and Vice-Chair positions and appointments are announced at NACo's Annual Business Meeting in July.

Serving on a NACo committee is an opportunity to make a tangible impact on issues that matter. Networking opportunities abound, allowing members to connect with fellow leaders and tap into extensive networks through committee liaison staff.

Participating on a NACo committee is a strategic gateway to active participation in shaping federal policy and advocating for counties. As the saying goes, "If you aren't at the table, you are on the menu!" NACo committees provide the platform where impactful change begins resulting in stronger counties and a stronger America.

Explore your options at www.naco.org/getinvolved or for questions, please email membership@naco.org.



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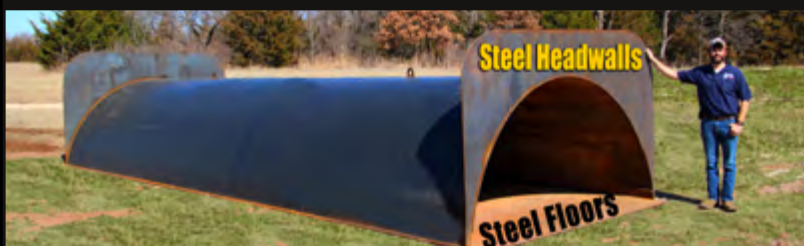
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Storm Season is Approaching

Author: Melinda Griffith, OCCEDB Transportation Programs Administrator

OCCEDB has funding available for the Storm Debris Cleanup Assistance Program.

Storm Debris Cleanup Assistance allows Counties to clean up debris located within county right-of-way, after a natural disaster has occurred. Counties reimbursement will be based on the current FEMA rates for employees, equipment, etc. (Counties will not be reimbursed prisoners' hourly wages.) Before and after pictures of the clean-up site will be required. Once the site has been cleaned up, the before and after pictures and a total of all associated costs will be forwarded to OCCEDB for reimbursement.

A natural disaster must occur and be declared by one of the following:

- I. The Board of County Commissioners
- II. State of Oklahoma
- III. Federal

Definition: Natural disasters include all types of severe weather, which have the potential to pose a significant threat to human health and safety, property, critical infrastructure, and security. This assistance program prepares counties for a variety of natural disasters, including winter storms, floods, tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes, high winds or any combination thereof.

Types of allowable reimbursement:

TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT LIMIT PER COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT- \$5,000

- I. Dump Roll Off's
- II. Labor (FEMA Rates)
- III. Equipment (FEMA Rates)
- IV. Landfill Fees
- V. *Other types of allowable reimbursement may be considered. DEQ and OCCEDB will review those requests.

Applications can be found at OCCEDB.org or contact Melinda Griffith at melindaa@okacco.org



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Mitigating Liability Through Training for Law Enforcement and Detention Staff

Author: Joe Koerner, ACCO Director of Training

In an era where public scrutiny and legal accountability are paramount, the importance of mitigating liability through comprehensive training for law enforcement and detention staff cannot be overstated. The role of these professionals is crucial in maintaining public safety, and proper training is a key factor in ensuring they navigate their responsibilities ethically and within the bounds of the law.

1. Enhanced Decision-Making:

Effective training equips law enforcement and detention staff with the skills to make sound decisions in high-pressure situations. Simulation exercises and scenario-based training enable them to hone their judgment and respond appropriately, reducing the likelihood of actions that could lead to legal repercussions.

2. Understanding Legal Standards:

Training programs emphasize the importance of understanding and adhering to legal standards and protocols. This includes staying updated on changes in legislation, ensuring that officers are aware of their rights and limitations, and promoting a culture of compliance within the law enforcement and detention communities.

3. De-escalation Techniques:

Given the rising concern over the use of force, training programs focus on de-escalation techniques. Teaching officers and staff how to defuse tense situations without resorting to excessive force not only protects the public but also shields law enforcement from potential legal consequences.

4. Documentation and Record-Keeping:

Accurate and thorough documentation is a fundamental aspect of mitigating liability. Training programs stress the importance of proper record-keeping, ensuring that incidents are documented accurately and comprehensively. This documentation can serve as a crucial defense in legal proceedings.

5. Accountability and Ethics:

Training instills a strong sense of accountability and ethics within law enforcement and detention staff. By emphasizing the ethical considerations of their roles, professionals are better equipped to make decisions aligned with moral principles, reducing the likelihood of actions that could result in legal consequences.

6.. Crisis Intervention:

Law enforcement and detention staff often encounter individuals in crisis. Training in crisis intervention equips them with the skills to handle these situations compassionately and safely, minimizing the risk of legal challenges arising from mishandling vulnerable individuals.

In conclusion, mitigating liability through training is an essential investment in the professionalism and integrity of law enforcement and detention staff. By providing comprehensive, up-to-date training programs, we can foster a culture of accountability, ethical conduct, and responsible decision-making, ultimately ensuring the safety and well-being of both the public and those tasked with upholding the law.

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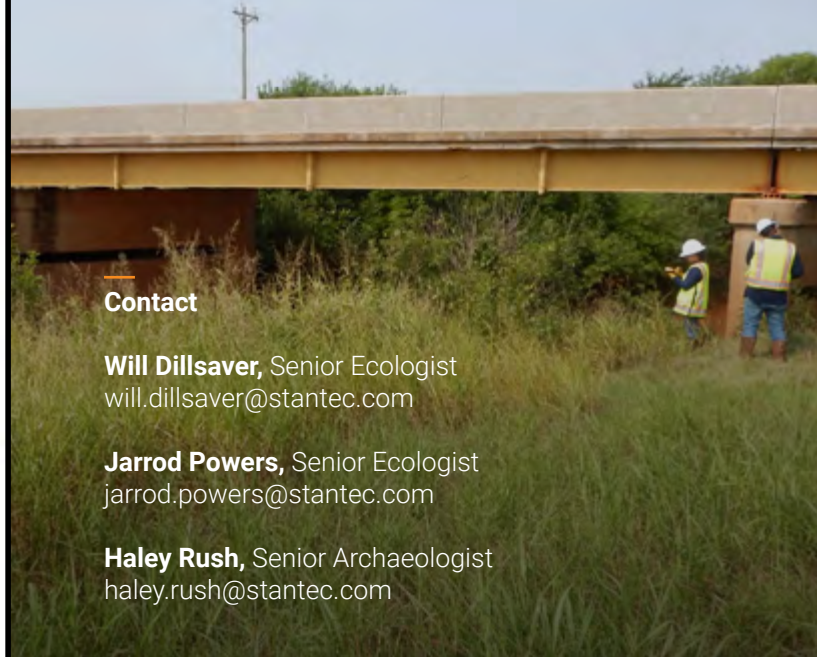
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(Spring 26 Room Block Opens 11/3/25)

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If you have any questions, please feel free to contact

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Hold Harmless Clauses and Use of Certificates of Insurance

Author: Dusty Birdsong, Administrator, ACCO-SIG/ACCO-SIF

It is important that counties always request certificates of insurance and hold harmless agreements from organizations, groups and/or individuals that either lease and/or use county owned buildings as a method of protecting it from future claims or lawsuits. The following paragraph outlines sample language that can be utilized to draft a basic hold harmless agreement when these types of arrangements are entered into with an outside party.

The use of the term “Second Party” refers to the organization, group and or individual that agree to enter into a contract with the county for use of a county owned building.

(Second Party) agrees to indemnify and hold harmless _____ County from any and all liability, loss, or damage that _____ County may suffer as a result of claims, demands, costs and or judgments against it arising from: (Describe the activities contemplated by the parties, for example: the county is leasing the fairgrounds arena and or a fairgrounds building to a rodeo contractor for either a rodeo and or a bull riding event).

It is also important to make sure the organization, group and/or individual that are using the county owned building has an insurance policy in effect that includes general liability coverage. In the event the “Second Party” has an insurance policy in force, the county should always request that it be named as an additional insured on their policy through a certificate of insurance. A copy of the certificate of insurance should be requested by the involved county and kept of file for at least two years.

The involved counties lease agreement should include the following language to accomplish this:

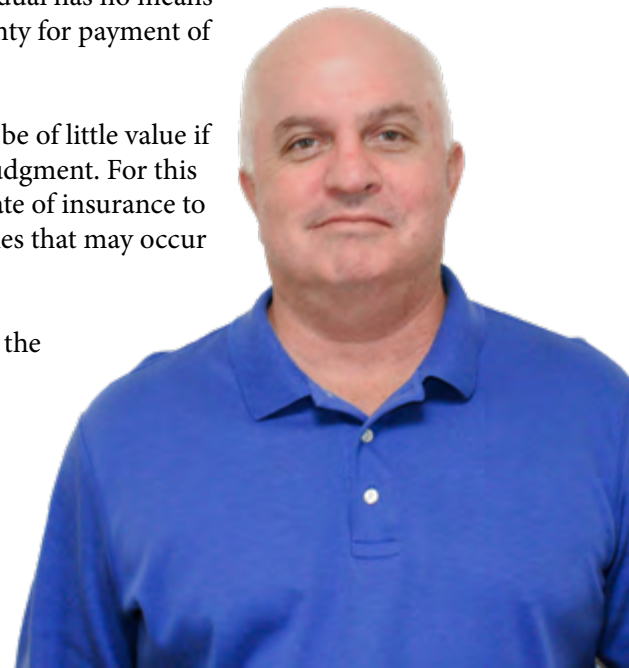
(Second Party) agrees to provide _____ County a certificate of insurance naming _____ County as an additional insured in an amount of not less than \$25,000/\$125,000/\$1,000,000 for liability policy limits.

The limits outlined in the above paragraph mirror Oklahoma’s Governmental Tort Claims Act and is the reason these specific liability limits are recognized. The applicable tort claims act liability limits in Tulsa and Oklahoma County’s would be \$25,000/\$175,000/\$1,000,000.

The purpose of this requirement is to make certain that the organization, group and/or individual has the financial means available to compensate an injured person if the injured person can legally seek recovery from involved party. If the injured party can recover for his injuries from the involved organization, group and or individual, he or she is less likely to look to the county for compensation. If the involved organization, group or individual has no means of compensating the injured person, they will be looking to the involved county for payment of their claim.

A hold harmless agreement executed by a “Second Party”, while helpful, may be of little value if the “Second Party” has no financial resources to pay for the defense cost or judgment. For this reason, it is important that the “Second Party” always provide a valid certificate of insurance to the involved county demonstrating its ability to defend and pay for any injuries that may occur while using county owned buildings and or property.

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ACCO SPRING CONFERENCE 2024 AGENDA

Wednesday March 27th, 2024

6:30am	Exhibit Hall Early Set Up	OK "F- J"
7:30am	Registration Opens	East Lobby
7:30am	Exhibit Hall Opens	OK "F-J"
8:30am	ODOT CAB Meeting	Sooner A & B
9:30am	County Engineers Meeting	Boomer A & B
10:00am	ACCO Ladies	PDR-1
10:00am	Educational Session	Oklahoma "E"
	<i>Damon Lane, Chief Meteorologist KOCO News 5</i>	
11:30am	Visit With Your Vendors Lunch on Your Own	
1:30pm	<u>General Session</u>	Oklahoma "E"
	Welcome	
	<i>ACCO President Commissioner Jim Rogers, Sequoyah Co.</i>	
	Invocation	
	National Anthem	
	<i>Representative Jon Echols, Majority Floor Leader</i>	
	<i>Cindy Byrd, Oklahoma State Auditor</i>	
	<i>Tim Gatz, Director of Oklahoma Department of Transportation</i>	
	<i>Chris Schroder, ACCO Executive Director</i>	
Following General Session	District Meetings	
	District #1	Oklahoma "E"
	District #2	Oklahoma "A"
	District #3	University "A"
	District #4	University "B"
	District #5	Oklahoma "C"
	District #6	Northpark
	District #7	Noble
	District #8	Oklahoma "B"
4:00pm	Registration Closes	East Lobby
5:30pm	Exhibit Hall Closes	OK "F- J"
5:45pm	Evening Meal	N. Conference Hallway
7:30pm	Clancy Davis Band	OK "A,B,C"

Thursday March 28th, 2024

7:30am	Registration Opens	East Lobby
7:30am	Exhibit Hall Opens	OK "F-J"
7:30am	Visit with your Vendors	OK "F-J"
8:30am	ACCO Board Meeting	University "A"
8:30am	ACCO SIG/SIF Board Meeting	University "A"
10:00am	Educational Session	OK "A, B, C"
	<u>ODOT Funding Programs for Counties</u>	
	<i>Matt Mitchell, ODOT</i>	
	<i>Brandon Dudgeon, ODOT</i>	
11:30am	OCCEDB Board Meeting	University "A"
11:30am	Lunch on Your Own	
2:00pm	Educational Session	OK "A, B, C"
	<u>New MUTCD Guidelines</u>	
	<i>(Signage Requirements, Workzone Safety, and More)</i>	
	<i>Dale Frech, ACCO</i>	
3:00pm	Exhibit Hall Closes/Teardown	
3:00pm	Registration Closes	
4:30pm	Bunny Money Bingo & Buffet	OK "E"
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DAMON LANE

CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

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AT 10:00 AM ON MARCH 27TH, 2024



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Workers Comp 101

The CC-Form 2, First Report of Injury, can be located on the ACCO Website at OKACCO.com and is located under the Insurance Program tab.

This form should be filled out and completed by the Employer, (NOT the injured worker) and sent to the Claims Department as soon as possible. Failure to turn in the completed CC-Form 2 within 10 days the Employer is made aware of the accident, may result in a \$500 penalty to the Employer.

Also, please provide a complete Social Security number as this is required in the system when we build the claim. If applicable, it would be helpful to provide the County District number.

At no time, should an injured worker provide their group health insurance information to the medical provider for a work-related injury.

As stated earlier, the Worker's Compensation Reporting Guidelines Checklist is located under the Insurance Program tab. We recommend you visit this checklist when any question arise or call the Claims Department and we will be happy to assist you.

By following these Guidelines, you can help ensure your Worker's Compensation claims are processed quickly, accurately and the injured employee receives the appropriate benefits.

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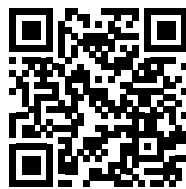
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OSU introduces Oklahoma Hydronet to improve water management

Media Contact: Alisa Boswell-Gore | Office of Communications & Marketing, OSU Agriculture | 405-744-7115 | alisa.gore@okstate.edu



Researchers from Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma prepare to install new soil water content sensors at an Oklahoma Mesonet site as part of the Oklahoma Hydronet initiative. The Hydronet system will also measure water stored in soil, aquifers and reservoirs. (Photo by OSU Agriculture)

Oklahoma State University researchers have partnered with other state and federal entities to improve the management of water resources across the state.

“We’re trying to create a world-class water monitoring network for our state to complement what we already have, which is a world-class meteorological network with the Oklahoma Mesonet,” said Tyson Ochsner, professor of plant and soil sciences in the Ferguson College of Agriculture.

Branded the Oklahoma Hydronet, the monitoring system will measure water stored in soil, aquifers and reservoirs. OSU is partnering with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Oklahoma Water Resources Center, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board and the University of Oklahoma for the project.

“Drought and flooding are always a problem in Oklahoma,” said Chris Adams, monitoring coordinator with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. “The Hydronet project is about being prepared for those things, so we can see where those water sources are at and plan accordingly. But it will also help us plan for the future.”

Ochsner said whether it is managing droughts and limited irrigation water or trying to predict floods, the state needs better water system monitoring. He said many reservoirs around the

state are not currently monitored for water levels.

“The amount of water stored in shallow aquifers can change quite a bit throughout the season and from year to year. I’ve talked to farmers who have said their crops failed because they ran out of water before their crops reached maturity,” Ochsner said. “They don’t know how much water will be available to their crops because we don’t have that kind of water monitoring system in place across the state.”

Ochsner said the first step will be to expand water level monitoring across the state for reservoirs and aquifers. “When making streamflow forecasts for an extreme weather event, it makes a big difference whether the reservoirs are full, empty or somewhere in the middle, but we don’t have that information available right now,” Ochsner said. “We have a good program to monitor the aquifers once per year, but that data is not provided in a timely fashion and is not going to help those managing water in season.”

The Hydronet project will install new sensors to monitor water levels and serve as a communications system for collecting and storing daily data and sharing it online. The system will also create maps and figures to help water managers and forecasters apply the data.

The Oklahoma Mesonet has had soil moisture sensors in place since 1996, but more accurate sensors will replace the outdated sensors at all Mesonet sites, and measurement depths will be extended to better represent the plant root zone.

"There will also be a research component because no one has had integrated water monitoring at this scale, so we haven't developed the science for using this type of integrative monitoring. This data will open powerful ways for us to make better forecasts for flooding or drought," Ochsner said. "Some communities rely on unmonitored groundwater aquifers or surface water reservoirs for their community water supply, so being better able to monitor and forecast those water resources will be directly relevant to many water users across the state."

Ochsner said the project has initial funding through the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, and researchers are seeking additional funding to maintain and grow the Hydronet beyond the initial two-year installation phase. He said U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas and former Sen. Jim Inhofe played a large role in making the Hydronet project possible.

"Leaders understanding the priority and value of water and water management is key. Water is going to continue to be an important topic for the growth and future of our state," Ochsner said. "We're going to continue to find ways to develop and support this effort, so it can have a long-term impact on Oklahoma. Hopefully, the state can serve as an example for other regions that want to implement similar systems."



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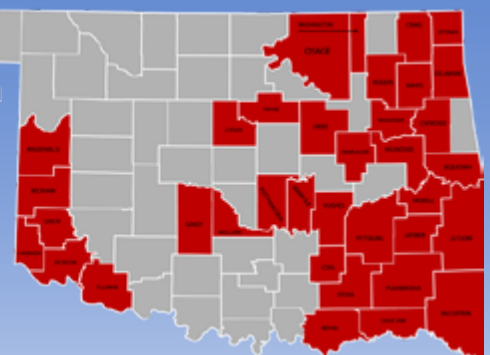
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