

BILL SUMMARY

1st Session of the 60th Legislature

Bill No.:	HB 2426
Version:	FA1
Request Number:	13329
Author:	Rep. Fetgatter
Date:	3/25/2025
Impact:	\$0

Research Analysis

The floor substitute to HB 2426 creates the professional severe weather tracker license and provides guidelines for professional severe weather trackers. A *professional severe weather tracker* is defined in the measure as a licensed individual or company hired by an established media outlet or affiliated with a research program at certain universities. Additionally, individuals who are a member of certain field research teams are authorized to be issued a severe weather tracker license. Licenses are issued by Service Oklahoma with a fee not to exceed \$500 for an initial three-year license and a renewal license fee of \$250. Violators are subject to a fine up to \$500 and revocation of their license.

Professional severe weather trackers are required to:

- Keep their license on file with either their employing media outlet, affiliated university, or affiliated field research team;
- Display their license number and either the Federal Communications Commission license number of the employing media outlet or the identifying number of the affiliated university on both sides of their primary storm tracking vehicle;
- Submit to a national criminal history record check;
- Provide Service Oklahoma with a recommendation letter from either the employing media outlet or the designee at the affiliated university. If the professional severe weather tracker is a member of a field research team, they must provide to Service Oklahoma proof of a team member's doctoral degree, funding statement for the field research team, and proof of membership;
- Provide Service Oklahoma with valid insurance coverage for the storm tracking vehicle. A minimum insurance coverage of \$1 million of combined single liability is required;
- Take an emergency driving course before receiving the license and upon every renewal; and
- If employed by a media outlet, have been employed or contracted with a media outlet for at least one year and have not been terminated for cause by a qualified media outlet in the last four years.

During a significant weather event, professional severe weather trackers are authorized to exceed maximum speed limits, proceed past red lights or stop signs after slowing down to check for cross traffic, disregard regulations governing direction of movement and turning in specified directions, travel on closed roads and highways, and are authorized to activate flashing green and yellow emergency lights on their vehicles.

Additionally, the measure establishes that a professional severe weather tracker license is not to be used for the purpose of finding filming locations. It also establishes that nothing in the act is

to prohibit the rights of any individual from engaging in recreational or commercial storm chasing.

Lastly, the measure creates the Severe Weather Tracker Licensure Fund in which all monies collected from license fees are to be deposited for the administrative costs associated with licensing professional severe weather trackers.

CHANGES IN FLOOR SUBSTITUTE VERSION FROM COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTTE:

The floor substitute adds definitions for *field research team* and *professional severe weather tracker's primary vehicle*. A *field research team* is defined as a privately funded meteorology research team sanctioned by a Doctor or principle researcher of the National Science Foundation or the National Institute of Science and Technology. Additionally, the floor substitute clarifies who can administer the required emergency driving course and clarifies what vehicles yield at rights-of-way.

Prepared By: Keana Swadley

Fiscal Analysis

The floor amendment to HB 2426 adds certain definitions and provides clarification where necessary, but it does not materially alter the prior fiscal impact statement. Therefore, the measure is not anticipated to have a direct fiscal impact on the state budget or appropriations.

Prepared By: Zach Lein, House Fiscal Staff

Other Considerations

None.