

**TITLE 35. OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND
FORESTRY
CHAPTER 56. EMERGENCY DROUGHT COMMITTEE [NEW]**

SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

35:56-1-1. Purpose

This Chapter sets forth provisions and requirements related to the Emergency Drought Committee, created under 27A O.S. § 2251. The Secretary of Agriculture holds exclusive authority to convene meetings of the Emergency Drought Committee (EDC) under 27A O.S. § 2251. These rules establish transparent criteria for:

- (1) Determining drought conditions that prompt the Secretary of Agriculture to convene an EDC meeting
- (2) Initiating emergency drought assistance programs
- (3) Scheduling and conducting meetings
- (4) Reviewing program actions
- (5) Presenting final reports

35:56-1-2. Primary Agency

The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) is responsible for:

- (1) Ensuring EDC compliance with the Open Meeting Act (OMA) and Open Records Act (ORA),
- (2) Preparing, posting, and distributing EDC agendas,
- (3) Recording and maintaining meeting minutes, and
- (4) Publishing EDC information, agendas, and minutes on the ODAFF website.

35:56-1-3. Considerations to Convene a Meeting

The Secretary of Agriculture will consider the following factors when determining the need to convene the Emergency Drought Committee (EDC) to develop drought assistance programs:

- (a) Primary Trigger:
 - (1) U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) Classification: If areas are classified as D2 (Severe Drought) or higher.
- (b) Secondary Consideration:
 - (1) Rapid Drought Escalation: If areas classified as D0 (Abnormally Dry) escalate rapidly to D1 (Moderate Drought) with additional supporting drought indicators suggesting further progression to D2 or higher.
- (c) Supporting Drought Indicators:
 - (1) Agricultural Impact Indicators:
 - (A) Crop Conditions and Yield Reports: Declining conditions in major crops (wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton).
 - (B) Pasture and Rangeland Conditions: Deterioration affecting livestock grazing.
 - (C) Livestock Water and Feed Availability: Decreasing pond levels and hay shortages.
 - (D) Farm Income Loss Estimates: Economic stress on producers due to yield reductions.

- (E) Irrigation Water Supply: Diminished availability from reservoirs, wells, or aquifers.
- (2) Water Resource and Infrastructure Indicators:
 - (A) Reservoir and Lake Levels: Declining water storage in key agricultural supply sources.
 - (B) Streamflow and River Conditions: Below-average flow rates affecting irrigation.
 - (C) Groundwater Depletion: Measured declines in aquifer levels (e.g., Ogallala Aquifer).
 - (D) Public and Agricultural Water Use Restrictions: Implementation of conservation measures.
- (3) Stakeholder and Local Reports:
 - (A) County and Regional Drought Committees: Reports from local agricultural organizations.
 - (B) Farmer and Rancher Input: Direct communication regarding challenges and needed assistance.
 - (C) Cooperative Extension Service Reports: Observations from agricultural advisors.

The Secretary of Agriculture may also seek expert input from the Oklahoma State Climatologist or other drought expertise.

35:56-1-4. Meetings; When Convened

Once drought factors have been reviewed and the Secretary of Agriculture determines that Oklahoma or parts of Oklahoma are experiencing continuous drought, the Secretary shall call for an initial EDC meeting.

- (a) **Initial Meeting.** At the first meeting, the EDC shall:
 - (1) Review drought indicators to assess the severity of conditions.
 - (2) Determine funding availability for an emergency drought program(s).
 - (3) Select and initiate the most appropriate emergency drought program(s) to assist landowners and producers.
 - (4) Determine what regions, counties, or areas of the state shall be eligible for the assistance provided through the approved emergency drought program.
- (b) **Ongoing Meetings.** The Secretary of Agriculture shall call:
 - (1) Quarterly meetings after emergency drought program initiation to review progress, make any program adjustments as needed, and/or discuss new or extended programming.
 - (2) Special meetings upon recommendation or request from committee members.
- (c) **Conclusion of Meetings.** The Secretary of Agriculture may cease quarterly meetings at the conclusion of an emergency drought program, after a final report has been submitted to the EDC.

35:56-1-5. Emergency Drought Programs

- (a) **Reporting Requirements:**
 - (1) Ongoing Reports: While an emergency drought program is active, the implementing agency shall provide updates at all EDC meetings.

- (2) Final Report: Upon the conclusion of an emergency drought program, the implementing agency shall submit a final report to the EDC.