OCS Public Safety Outreach
User Certification Policy

OK-FIRST and ONALERT Programs

**Purpose.** This document sets forth the policy used by the Oklahoma Climatological Survey (OCS) to certify public-safety officials to use the OK-FIRST/ONALERT web sites. This policy specifically addresses the problems of attrition, continuing education/training, and multiple users per agency.

**Rationale.** OCS believes that the service provided by the outreach programs known as OK-FIRST and ONALERT are essential to maintaining the public safety of citizens of Oklahoma. To that end, OCS receives a state appropriation every year to administer this information service. Because of the technical nature of the information provided by the OK-FIRST/ONALERT web sites, it has been strongly recommended by existing OK-FIRST/ONALERT users, by OCS staff, and by the National Weather Service offices in Norman and Tulsa, that training of all OK-FIRST/ONALERT users is an essential and critical portion of these public safety outreach programs. The motivation behind these policies is to guard against misuse of the information provided by these web sites. Misuse of this information can place public safety officials and the public at grave risk.

**Initial Certification.** Access to the OK-FIRST/ONALERT web sites (including software plus username and password) will only be granted following the completion of a data interpretation workshop. Normally, these workshops are held once per year in the early Spring. If demand for these workshops grows, more workshops may be offered, pending available funds and facilities. Completion of the data interpretation course provides the participant with certification to use the web site.

**Continuing Training.** Because the potential of misuse of the information provided by OK-FIRST is high, and because the OK-FIRST system is upgraded frequently, there exists a need for continuing education/training. Access to the OK-FIRST and ONALERT systems will be terminated for agencies who have not completed at least one refresher training course provided by OCS in an 18-month period. To that end, OCS staff will conduct multiple training courses per year, in a regional basis, to permit users to maintain certification to use the system. If a user chooses not to be re-certified, and if this user possesses an OK-FIRST/ONALERT computer from OCS, this computer will be retrieved by OCS staff.
Multiple Use Per Agency. It is desirable for multiple users at an agency to receive OK-FIRST/ONALERT certification. This additional certification allows the system to be used effectively in the event that the primary user is unavailable. In addition, multiple certified users per agency provide a mechanism to address the problem of attrition. OCS offers regular "Assistant’s Workshops" that are specifically designed to provide instruction for personnel who are familiar with the system, but require additional details on data interpretation.

Attrition. When a certified user leaves an agency, it is the agency’s responsibility to ensure a smooth transition between the certified user and the replacement user. When a certified user leaves an agency, it is recommended that the certified user work with the replacement user to provide certain information about the system. This information includes instructions on how to use the system, system documentation, and data interpretation training. When this occurs, the new user may obtain temporary certification from OK-FIRST, but should plan on attending the next regularly scheduled data interpretation workshop. If a replacement user does not receive training from the previous user, access to OK-FIRST/ONALERT will be terminated, and any computer provided by OK-FIRST or ONALERT shall be returned to OCS. When this access is terminated, the replacement user may apply to participate in the next regular data interpretation workshop.

Computer Policy. Any computer equipment provided to an OK-FIRST/ONALERT user by OCS on extended loan remains the property of OCS. OCS staff shall be notified if this equipment is relocated. OCS retains the right to retrieve the equipment at any time as deemed necessary by OCS staff.

Dale A. Morris  
Program Manager, Public Safety Outreach