



# Oklahoma Conservation Commission

## District Directors' Responsibilities: A 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational/discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that board members review these guides before a board meeting and then have a ten minute discussion on them at a meeting.

### *Guide No. 6 Setting District Policies*

Conservation district policies provide guidance and rules for district board members and employees in carrying out the day-to-day district business. Unfortunately, districts often establish a policy in a board meeting and the minutes are the only place that the policy is recorded. That means past meeting minutes have to be researched whenever there is a question about a policy, which is often very time consuming.

#### **Why Establish District Policies?**

District employees and board members need to know what the policies are for a variety of district operations. For example: a district equipment manager needs to know how much money they can spend on equipment repair without board approval.

District employees are required to work with limited supervision and guidance and good policies can make their job easier and result in less problems. Employees need to know the policy for taking time off, earning and use of compensatory time, attending meetings, and travel including reimbursement of expenses.

Keeping up with set policies can make district directors better supervisors and be more aware of their responsibilities.

Once policies are established by the board and made accessible to board members and employees, it will be easier to keep them current.

#### **A Few Suggested Areas Where District Policies Might be Needed:**

1. District office hours.
2. Financial management (Example: who is authorized to spend district funds and any limits on spending).
3. Office policies (who has keys, who is responsible for locking building at night, etc.)
4. Equipment policies (Example: equipment can not be used by employees or board members for personal use).

Policies establishing charges for equipment rental and how to handle late payment for the use of equipment, etc. This can help assure all customers are treated the same.

5. Assistance to NRCS. Policy on the kinds of work district employees are expected to carry out in assisting NRCS personnel and what portion of their time should be devoted to this assistance.

6. Other areas where policies are needed to help carry out the day-to-day district activities.

#### **How to Organize District Policies:**

Districts might consider establishing a policy binder with categories such as those above to make it easy to maintain and access the policies.

Whenever a policy is established in a board meeting, it should be recorded in the minutes and also placed in the binder with a reference of the board meeting action, date, etc.

#### **Policy Review**

Policies should be reviewed annually to ensure staff and directors are aware and in compliance with established policies and to see if any changes need to be made.

*Consider placing an item on a board meeting agenda to discuss and establish district policies. If it turns out several policies are needed, consider appointing a committee of board members and employees to draft policies for consideration at a future board meeting. This will reduce the time taken for development of policies during board meetings.*