

'Soft' Weather Claims Urged

By Ed Montgomery

Weather modification advocates must guard against overselling their product, the members of the new Weather Modification Advisory Committee were told Thursday.

Ralph McPherson of Altus spoke up when committee members were discussing a claim by Dr. Irving Krick, head of a weather modification firm, that no fatal tornado had ever occurred in an area where his organization was seeding clouds.

McPherson is a member of the advisory committee and was recently named to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

He told the group, headed by Robert S. Kerr Jr. of Oklahoma City, that the committee should be conservative in its claims.

Ferdie Deering of Oklahoma City, a member of the committee and a pioneer in state weather modification efforts, said he knows of no scientific studies to back up Krick's observations. He agreed that the committee should avoid making excessive claims.

Dick Hamilton of Harmon said from personal observation that there have been no fatal tornadoes during the past five years while cloud seeding has been under way in Ellis County.

Deering said people should be made to understand that weather modification will not change the climate of an area but rather will tend to even out its rainfall at near the top normal levels.

Sen. Bob Funston, D-Broken Arrow, agreed. He said it should be pointed out that slight changes can make a big difference at the right time in a dry area.

McPherson said people should know that weather modification probably could not prevent a drouth but would probably reduce its effects.

Deering said people not directly associated with farming or ranching generally do not inform themselves on weather modification matters and vote against proposed levies for that purpose because they fear the unknown.

Paul Wilson, acting executive director of the water resources board, proposed that the advisory committee request a \$12,000 supplemental appropriation from the legislature when it meets in January to provide operating funds for the committee. The advisory committee approved the suggestion.