

Alabama: Overview

Everything in the main manual and the skill guides applies in Alabama exactly as written. What's different here is the specific hazard profile and the state, local, and legal context around it. This page is the starting point; the other three pages under Alabama go deeper on laws, local resources, and the data behind the risks named here.

April 27, 2011: the deadliest day in Alabama's tornado history

Georgia's page on this site covers the April 2011 Super Outbreak's Ringgold-Apison tornado; Alabama absorbed far more of that outbreak's total damage than any other state. On April 27, 2011 alone, 62 tornadoes touched down across Alabama, including the Tuscaloosa-Birmingham EF4, which killed 64 people along an 80.7-mile path, and the Hackleburg EF5, one of only four EF5-rated tornadoes in the entire outbreak. Alabama's statewide death toll from the outbreak exceeded 230, more than any other state affected. See the Risks page for the full data.

Hurricane Ivan: a direct hit on the Alabama Gulf Coast

Alabama's coastline carries real hurricane risk independent of its tornado exposure. Hurricane Ivan made its first U.S. landfall near Gulf Shores, Alabama on September 16, 2004, as a Category 3 storm with sustained winds over 120 mph and a storm surge of 10-15 feet along the coast into Mobile Bay.

What this means for how you use the rest of this manual

The manual's Tier structure and the skill guides apply without modification. What's different in Alabama: tornado season preparedness, a safe room, a weather radio, and a practiced shelter plan, deserves the highest priority this manual gives it anywhere, Alabama's death toll from a single day in 2011 makes the stakes concrete, and Gulf Coast households need hurricane evacuation and storm surge planning on top of that.

Sources

- April 27, 2011 Alabama tornado outbreak death toll and individual tornado data: PMC/NIH mortality study; Wikipedia, sourced to NWS

- Hurricane Ivan landfall, winds, and storm surge: NHC Tropical Cyclone Report; NOAA NCEI

Alabama: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: a private property right, essentially unregulated

Alabama treats rainwater harvesting as simply part of what a property owner is entitled to do with their own land, with no dedicated state regulatory framework at all.

Rule	Alabama
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No; the state has no current regulations specifically governing rainwater harvesting
Permitted uses	Personal, non-potable use
Institutional support	Both Alabama A&M and Auburn University's Extension services publish guidance actively encouraging rainwater collection, with technical instructions

Where to find it: the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (aces.edu) publishes rainwater harvesting guidance for homeowners.

Water rights: riparian, with use restricted to riparian land

Alabama follows the riparian doctrine for surface water, allowing reasonable use but restricting where diverted water can actually be used.

Concept	How it works in Alabama
Who holds the right	Landowners whose property touches a water source
Governing principle	Reasonable use: a landowner may use any quantity of water from a source if the use itself is reasonable
Key restriction	Diverted water generally can't be used on non-riparian land, only on the property actually touching the water source, without a court order permitting an exception

Permitless carry since 2023, with active 2026 legislative pushback

Alabama has allowed permitless carry since January 1, 2023, but the policy isn’t without current political contest.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless ("constitutional") carry since January 1, 2023
Minimum age	18
Optional permit	Available in 1-year, 5-year, and lifetime versions; no training required to obtain one

This is a live legislative issue, not settled history

As of early 2026, a bill (SB267) has been introduced in the Alabama Legislature that would require a permit to carry a pistol in a vehicle or on one’s person, with criminal penalties for violating that requirement, effectively reversing permitless carry. As of this writing, it remains a proposed bill, not enacted law, and permitless carry is still in effect. Confirm current status before relying on this page if you’re reading it well after 2026.

Sources

- Alabama rainwater harvesting rules and Extension guidance: LawShun; Landifyr
- Alabama riparian water rights: Alabama Farmers Federation; University of Alabama School of Law
- Alabama permitless carry status and 2026 SB267: Fox News; Alabama Legislature SB267

Alabama: Local Resources

AEMA and Ready Alabama

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency runs public preparedness outreach through Ready Alabama, focused on building a household emergency kit and general disaster awareness, in partnership with the national Ready.gov campaign.

Where to find it: servealabama.gov/ready-alabama-1.

Alabama Extension: run jointly by two universities, unlike most states covered on this site

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is unusual among the states covered here: it’s operated jointly by Alabama A&M University and Auburn University rather than a single land-grant institution.

- **Alabama Extension Master Gardener Program:** a 14-week course providing 50 hours of classroom and hands-on training, followed by 50 volunteer hours within 12 months to certify (10 of which must be worked on the Master Gardener Helpline specifically), then 25 volunteer hours and 10 continuing-education hours annually to maintain it.

Where to find it: mg.aces.edu lists local Master Gardener associations.

CERT: county-run, coordinated through AEMA

Alabama’s CERT programs are organized at the county level, Tuscaloosa County and Jefferson County among the active examples, following the standard FEMA curriculum.

Typical time commitment

Alabama CERT training typically runs 18-21 hours total, often delivered as one evening session a week over about two months.

Where to find it: ema.alabama.gov/preparedness; search “[your county] CERT” for a local program.

Sources

- AEMA Ready Alabama campaign: Serve Alabama
- Alabama Extension Master Gardener Program structure and requirements: Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Alabama CERT program structure and county examples: Tuscaloosa County EMA; Jefferson County EMA

BY STATE › ALABAMA

Alabama: Risks & Trends

Same standard as every other page on this site: every figure below is independently sourced, and figures that vary across sources, or measure genuinely different things, are flagged as such rather than collapsed into one number that looks more precise than the underlying data actually supports.

April 27, 2011: Alabama’s deadliest tornado day on record

Metric	Figure
Alabama deaths, full outbreak	230+
Alabama injuries	~2,200
Tornadoes in Alabama	69 (62 on April 27 alone)
Tuscaloosa-Birmingham tornado: rating/path/deaths	EF4, 80.7 mi, 64 deaths (44 Tuscaloosa, 20 Birmingham), 1,500+ injuries
Hackleburg-Phil Campbell tornado: rating/path/deaths	EF5, 102 mi across 5 counties, 71 deaths, 145+ injuries, the deadliest single tornado in Alabama history
Cordova tornadoes: deaths/injuries	13 deaths, 54 injuries (struck twice, EF3 then EF4)
National ranking	Alabama suffered more deaths than any other state in the largest tornado outbreak in U.S. history

Why this outbreak still matters for comparison across the site

Georgia’s page on this site covers the same April 2011 outbreak through its Ringgold-Apison EF4, one tornado among the outbreak’s hundreds. Alabama’s toll wasn’t from one storm, it was from dozens of tornadoes striking across the state in a single day, including 2 of the outbreak’s 4 EF5-rated tornadoes (Hackleburg-Phil Campbell and Rainsville); the other 2 EF5s, Philadelphia and Smithville, struck Mississippi. Alabama’s share of the outbreak’s total death toll was larger than any other affected state’s.

Hurricane Ivan (2004): a direct hit on Gulf Shores

Metric	Figure
Landfall location and date	Near Gulf Shores, AL, September 16, 2004
Landfall strength	Category 3, 120+ mph sustained winds
Storm surge (Destin, FL to Mobile Bay, AL)	10-15 ft
Total U.S. deaths (full storm lifecycle)	57
Total U.S. damage	~\$14-27 billion (estimates vary by source and dollar-year adjustment)

What these two have in common

Alabama’s tornado risk and its Gulf Coast hurricane risk are both severe by national standards but strike on very different timescales, tornadoes with minutes of warning, hurricanes with days, which is part of why this manual treats a practiced, fast shelter response and a longer-lead evacuation plan as two genuinely separate skills rather than one general “severe weather” plan.

Sources

- April 27, 2011 Alabama tornado outbreak data: PMC/NIH mortality study; Wikipedia, sourced to NWS
- Hurricane Ivan landfall, damage, and death toll: NHC Tropical Cyclone Report; Florida Tech