Arkansas: Overview

Everything in the main manual and the skill guides applies in Arkansas 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 Arkansas go deeper on laws, local resources, and the data behind the risks named here.

The 2014 Mayflower-Vilonia tornado

On April 27, 2014, an EF4 tornado with winds up to 190 mph tracked more than 41 miles through central Arkansas, from Mayflower through Vilonia, killing 16 people and injuring 193. One of the deaths occurred inside an above-ground storm shelter, believed to be the first known fatality of its kind, a detail that matters directly for how this manual's shelter guidance should be read: a shelter reduces risk, it does not eliminate it, and placement and anchoring still matter. See the Risks page for the full data.

The Guy-Greenbrier earthquake swarm: a hazard this manual hasn't covered yet

Between 2010 and 2011, a stretch of central Arkansas near the towns of Guy and Greenbrier experienced over 14,000 earthquakes, most too small to feel, but including a magnitude 4.7 event, the largest instrumentally recorded in the area. This wasn't ordinary natural seismicity: researchers linked the swarm to underground disposal of wastewater from nearby natural gas drilling, and the earthquakes largely stopped within months after the state shut the injection wells down. Every other seismic risk covered elsewhere on this site, from California's San Andreas system to the New Madrid Seismic Zone under the central Mississippi Valley, is naturally occurring. Arkansas's swarm is a reminder that some seismic risk is driven by ongoing industrial activity nearby, and can, in principle, be turned off rather than merely endured. See the Risks page for the full data.

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 Arkansas: this manual's storm-shelter guidance should be read alongside the Mayflower-Vilonia shelter fatality, not as a reason to skip a shelter but as a reason to take its construction and anchoring seriously, and residents in the Guy-

Greenbrier area or near other active injection-well zones have a genuine reason to track local seismic activity that residents elsewhere in the state do not.

Sources

- 2014 Mayflower-Vilonia tornado track, winds, deaths, and injuries: Wikipedia; KARK
- Guy-Greenbrier earthquake swarm cause and scale: Wikipedia; CNN

Arkansas: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: unrestricted for non-potable use

Arkansas places no state-level restriction on collecting rainwater in a barrel or cistern for garden or other non-potable use.

Rule	Arkansas
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No, at the state level, for basic residential collection
Permitted uses	Non-potable; the state's onsite non-potable reuse guideline also covers uses like water closet and urinal flushing
Technical requirements for reuse systems	Filtration, a debris excluder, and an automatic first-flush diverter

Where to find it: the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture (uaex.uada.edu) publishes homeowner guidance.

Water rights: pure riparian doctrine

Arkansas water law is built on riparian doctrine: the right to use water belongs to landowners whose property touches the source, and all riparian users must share limited supply proportionally rather than on a first-come basis.

Concept	How it works in Arkansas
Basic rule	Riparian landowners may use the water they need from an adjacent source, but must scale back if the source can't meet every riparian user's needs
Registration threshold	Diverting more than 325,900 gallons (1 acre-foot) in a calendar year requires registering with the Arkansas Natural Resources Division
Groundwater	Governed separately, with its own conservation and registration rules administered by the same division

Where to find it: the Arkansas Natural Resources Division (formerly the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission) administers water rights registration.

Permitless carry since 2013, clarified in 2023

Arkansas has recognized permitless carry since August 16, 2013, with a 2023 law change removing lingering ambiguity about whether carrying itself, not just possessing, a handgun without a permit was fully protected.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, open or concealed, for anyone 18+ legally eligible to possess a firearm
2023 clarification	SB480, signed February 3, 2023, confirmed the right to carry concealed without a license
Optional license	A Concealed Handgun Carry License remains available, minimum age 21 (18 for active military and veterans), requiring a state-approved 5-hour course with live fire, for $100
Why get the optional license anyway	Reciprocity in states that don't recognize Arkansas's permitless standard for out-of-state residents

A live legislative issue, not settled history

Arkansas's induced-seismicity moratorium described on the Risks page was a regulatory action by the Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission, not a permanent statute. Regulatory posture toward wastewater injection near populated areas can shift with drilling activity and state administration; residents near active or former injection-well zones should check the Commission's current rules rather than assume 2011's moratorium area still applies unchanged.

Sources

- Arkansas rainwater harvesting guidance: University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture; EPA
- Arkansas riparian water law and registration threshold: National Agricultural Law Center; University of Arkansas Extension
- Arkansas permitless carry (2013 statute; SB480, 2023): Protect With Bear
- Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission moratorium, 2011: Wikipedia

Arkansas: Local Resources

ADEM: county-judge-coordinated, not centrally run

The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management, under the Department of Public Safety, coordinates the state's all-hazards preparedness program, but day-to-day emergency management in Arkansas runs through county judges and local emergency management coordinators in all 75 counties rather than a single statewide office handling response directly.

Where to find it: adem.arkansas.gov lists county-level contacts and current CERT grant programs.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Extension: Master Gardener Program

The University of Arkansas's Extension arm runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site, though its footprint is notably wide for a state Arkansas's size.

- **Arkansas Master Gardener Program**: active in 67 of the state's 75 counties since 1988. A 40-hour horticulture course covering annuals, perennials, shrubs, fruits, and vegetables, followed by ongoing volunteer service to remain active.

Where to find it: uaex.uada.edu/yard-garden/master-gardeners lists county programs and how to apply.

CERT: concentrated in the state's most populous counties

Arkansas's CERT programs are organized locally rather than through one statewide standard, active in Pulaski County (Little Rock), Benton and Washington counties (Northwest Arkansas), Sebastian County (Fort Smith), Craighead County (Jonesboro), and other jurisdictions. Training is free and typically runs eight sessions.

Coverage varies by county

Unlike states covered elsewhere on this site with a single statewide CERT curriculum body, Arkansas's CERT programs are organized county by county. Residents outside the counties listed above should check with ADEM directly for the nearest active team, since coverage does not yet reach all 75 counties.

Where to find it: adem.arkansas.gov/aem/grants-funding/cert.

Sources

- ADEM structure and county coordination: Arkansas Department of Public Safety
- Arkansas Master Gardener Program history and county coverage: University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture
- Arkansas CERT county programs: New World Survival

BY STATE › ARKANSAS

Arkansas: 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.

The 2014 Mayflower-Vilonia tornado

Metric	Figure
Date	April 27, 2014
Rating	EF4
Peak winds	190 mph
Path length	41.10 mi
Maximum path width	1,320 yards
Duration	56 minutes
Deaths	16, including one inside an above-ground storm shelter
Injuries	193
Damage	$223.45 million (2014 USD)
Communities hit	Paron, Mayflower, Lake Conway, Vilonia, El Paso

The above-ground shelter fatality

One of the 16 deaths occurred inside an above-ground storm shelter, believed to be the first documented fatality of its kind in a tornado. It doesn’t mean above-ground shelters are unsafe as a category; it means a shelter’s protection depends on its specific construction, anchoring, and placement relative to the tornado’s actual path and debris field, not on the fact that it is labeled a shelter.

The Guy-Greenbrier earthquake swarm: induced, not natural

Metric	Figure
Active period	July 2010 - October 2011
Earthquakes detected	14,604 (magnitude -1.5 to 2.9 for the vast majority)
Largest recorded event	Magnitude 4.7, night of February 27, 2011
Suspected cause	Wastewater disposal wells associated with Fayetteville Shale natural gas drilling, injecting near the Guy-Greenbrier fault
Disposal wells in the area, 2009-2011	6
Regulatory response	Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission moratorium on new disposal wells in the area, adopted unanimously July 27, 2011
Outcome after wells shut down	Seismicity dropped off within about three months

A hazard that can be turned off

Every other seismic risk on this site, including the New Madrid Seismic Zone covered on Illinois, Missouri, and Tennessee's pages, is naturally occurring and cannot be switched off by a regulatory order. The Guy-Greenbrier swarm is the exception: once the disposal wells linked to it stopped operating, the earthquakes largely stopped within months. That doesn't make the risk zero for residents near other active injection sites, but it does mean tracking well permits and Commission actions is a genuinely actionable step in a way that tracking natural fault stress is not.

Sources

- 2014 Mayflower-Vilonia tornado data: Wikipedia; KARK
- Guy-Greenbrier earthquake swarm data and moratorium: Wikipedia; CNN