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Delaware: Overview

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

The Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962: a storm that wouldn't leave

Between March 5 and 9, 1962, an unusually slow-moving nor'easter parked itself off the mid-Atlantic coast and refused to move on, flooding Delaware's coastline across five separate high tides over three days rather than the single tidal surge a typical storm produces. An estimated 6,000 people along the Delaware coast ended up in emergency shelters, and the storm killed 40 people across six affected states. See the Risks page for the full data.

Sea level rise: Delaware's coast at nearly twice the global rate

Delaware is uniquely exposed among the states covered on this site: low elevation, flat terrain, and ongoing land subsidence combine so that sea levels along its coast are rising at roughly twice the global average, and tidal flooding has already increased 260% since 2000. Current projections put the state on track to lose 11% of its total land mass to beach erosion at current rates, and some coastal properties already facing repeated tidal flooding are projected to see that risk expand significantly within the next decade. 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 Delaware: a slow-moving coastal storm can produce repeated flooding across several tide cycles rather than one surge, so this manual's flood-evacuation guidance should account for a multi-day event, not just a single high-water moment, and coastal Delaware households face one of the more severe standing sea-level-rise trajectories covered on this site, a genuine long-term planning consideration beyond any single storm.

Sources

- Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962 data: Wikipedia; National Park Service

- Delaware sea level rise and erosion data: Sea Level Rise; Delaware DNREC

Delaware: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: legal, sponsored, and formally recognized as stormwater management

Delaware treats rainwater harvesting as a genuine stormwater management tool, not just a permitted hobby.

Rule	Delaware
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No water rights permit needed
Governing standards	Delaware Administrative Code Title 7 §5101-11.0 (Post Construction BMP Standards) and the 2018 State Plumbing Code (referencing 2015 IPC §1303)
State posture	Sponsors incentive programs encouraging rainwater harvesting as sustainable stormwater management

Where to find it: the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (dnrec.delaware.gov).

Water rights: riparian rights blended with natural-flow doctrine

Delaware’s water law combines ordinary riparian rights with the natural-flow doctrine, shaped by centuries of accumulated water law plus more recent coastal-protection legislation and a federal interstate program managing the Delaware River.

Concept	How it works in Delaware
Basic rule	Riparian use must be reasonable, judged by comparing the proposed use against other riparian landowners' uses and any interference with downstream users
Interstate layer	The Delaware River is separately managed under a federal interstate compact given the river's shared multi-state significance

Where to find it: the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control administers state water regulation.

Concealed carry: a court-issued, may-issue license

Delaware requires a Concealed Deadly Weapon License (CDWL), issued by the Superior Court on a may-issue basis, though in practice most qualified applicants are approved.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	May-issue CDWL, issued by the Superior Court
Public notice requirement	Applicants must publish intent to apply in a local newspaper at least 10 days before filing
Other requirements	Firearm training course, five references, and a background check
License validity	3 years initial, 5 years on renewal
2026 status	No permitless-carry legislation has been enacted

A public-notice step unlike any other state covered here

Delaware’s requirement to publish intent to apply for a carry license in a local newspaper before filing is a genuinely distinctive procedural step, not seen on any other state’s page on this site. It doesn’t change the underlying approval odds for qualified applicants, but it is a real, publicly visible part of the process.

Sources

- Delaware rainwater harvesting rules and stormwater standards: NTO Tank
- Delaware riparian and natural-flow water law: SSRN, James R. May
- Delaware CDWL requirements: Delaware Department of Justice; Alien Gear Holsters

Delaware: Local Resources

Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)

DEMA is the lead state agency coordinating emergency preparedness, training, response, recovery, and mitigation to protect lives and Delaware's economic base.

Where to find it: dema.delaware.gov.

University of Delaware/Delaware State University: Master Gardener Program

Delaware's Master Gardener program is a genuine cross-institution partnership, jointly run through both of the state's land-grant universities rather than a single school's Extension arm.

- **Delaware Master Gardener Program:** training delivered by Cooperative Extension Specialists and Agents from both the University of Delaware and Delaware State University, plus green-industry experts and experienced Master Gardeners, covering plant ID, soils, integrated pest management, and program design.

Where to find it: udel.edu/canr/cooperative-extension/master-gardeners.

CERT: relaunched statewide in September 2025

DEMA relaunched its free Community Emergency Response Team initiative in September 2025, timed to National Preparedness Month. Participants receive classroom instruction in preparedness and disaster response plus hands-on activities and simulations, preparing them to provide basic support in the critical window before first responders arrive.

A recently relaunched program

Because Delaware's CERT initiative was specifically relaunched in September 2025, availability and specific class schedules may still be expanding. Check DEMA's current training page for the latest session offerings rather than assuming a long-established, stable schedule.

Where to find it: dema.delaware.gov/preparedness/training.

Sources

- DEMA structure and mission: Delaware Emergency Management Agency
- Delaware CERT relaunch, September 2025: State of Delaware News
- Delaware Master Gardener Program structure: University of Delaware

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Delaware: 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 Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962

Metric	Figure
Dates	March 5-9, 1962
Duration parked off coast	3 days, across 5 separate high tides
Deaths (6-state total)	40
Injuries (6-state total)	1,000+
Delaware residents sheltered	~6,000, per contemporary newspaper estimate
Damage (6-state total)	Hundreds of millions of dollars (1962 dollars)

Why five high tides mattered more than one big surge

A typical coastal storm floods an area once and recedes. The Ash Wednesday Storm’s defining feature was that it barely moved for three days, so the same coastal areas flooded again and again across five separate high-tide cycles, compounding damage that a single surge, even a larger one, might not have caused.

Sea level rise: a standing risk projected to reshape the coastline

Metric	Figure
Current rate vs. global average	~2x the global average rate of sea level rise
Rise over the past century	Up to 15 in, per tide gauge records
Increase in tidal flooding since 2000	260%
Mid-century projection	1-1.5 additional feet of sea level rise
2100 projection (high-emissions scenario)	4-6 additional feet
Projected land mass loss to erosion	~11% of the state's total land, at current erosion rates of 3+ ft/year
At-risk properties, Bethany Beach	676 today, projected 814 by 2033
At-risk properties, South Bethany	534 today, projected 855 within 15 years

One of the most severe standing coastal risks on the site

Every coastal state covered on this site faces some degree of sea level rise, but Delaware’s combination of low elevation, flat terrain, and active land subsidence makes its rate of change, roughly double the global average, and its projected land loss among the most severe documented here. This isn’t a single event with a date attached; it’s a compounding, ongoing condition that raises the baseline risk for every future coastal storm.

Sources

- Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962 data: Wikipedia; National Park Service
- Delaware sea level rise and erosion projections: Sea Level Rise; Delaware DNREC; Climate Central