

Kansas: Overview

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

The 2007 Greensburg tornado: a town erased in minutes

On the night of May 4, 2007, an EF5 tornado, the first ever rated under the newly implemented Enhanced Fujita Scale, struck the town of Greensburg with winds near 205 mph and a path 1.7 miles wide. It destroyed 95% of the town, killing 12 people. Greensburg's rebuilding effort afterward, centered on green/sustainable construction, became a widely studied model, but that's a story for after the disaster; this manual's concern is the 65 minutes the tornado was on the ground. See the Risks page for the full data.

The Ogallala Aquifer: a slow-moving version of the Dust Bowl's cause

Western Kansas sits over the Ogallala Aquifer, the primary water source that let the Great Plains recover from the 1930s Dust Bowl through irrigation. That aquifer is now being drawn down faster than it recharges, with some estimates projecting it could be roughly 70% depleted within 50 years. Paleoclimatic data shows a Dust-Bowl-severity drought hits western Kansas three to four times a century on its own; layering a depleted aquifer on top of the next one is a materially different, and worse, version of the same underlying risk. 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 Kansas: tornado risk here can be genuinely total, not partial, as Greensburg's 95% destruction figure shows, so shelter planning and a go-bag ready to grab matter as much as anywhere covered on this site; and if you're in the western part of the state relying on groundwater, water rights and long-term supply planning deserve real attention now rather than being a someday problem.

Sources

- 2007 Greensburg tornado data: Wikipedia; Fox Weather
- Ogallala Aquifer depletion and Dust Bowl recurrence risk: Kansas Reflector; Yale E360

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Kansas: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: unrestricted for domestic use up to a specific threshold

The Kansas Water Appropriation Act specifically protects the right to harvest rainwater for domestic purposes, with a defined scope for what counts as domestic use.

Rule	Kansas
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required for domestic use	No, if within the domestic-use definition
Domestic-use definition	Household use, watering livestock on pasture, or watering up to 2 acres of lawn and garden
Beyond that threshold	A Department of Agriculture permit may be required, and any storage large enough to affect downstream flow is subordinate to existing water rights

Where to find it: the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources (agriculture.ks.gov) publishes water law basics.

Water rights: prior appropriation, the same family as Utah’s

Kansas is a prior-appropriation state: the state owns all water, and use rights are granted on a “first in time, first in right” basis, the same doctrine already covered for Utah, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona’s surface water.

Concept	How it works in Kansas
Basic rule	Earliest-dated water right holders have first claim during a shortage
Groundwater	Governed under the same appropriation framework as surface water, notably relevant given the Ogallala Aquifer's decline in western Kansas
Administration	Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources

Where to find it: the Division of Water Resources administers appropriation permits.

Permitless carry since 2015, with a distinctive 18-20 provisional tier

Kansas has recognized permitless carry for adults 21 and older since July 1, 2015.

Requirement	Detail
Standard (21+)	Permitless carry, concealed, for anyone 21+ legally eligible to possess a firearm
18-20 year olds	Not covered by the permitless standard; may obtain a provisional License to Carry Concealed Handgun with approved training instead
Optional license (21+)	Remains available for reciprocity in states that don't recognize Kansas's permitless standard

A two-tier system, not a single age line

Most permitless-carry states covered on this site draw one age line and stop. Kansas instead gives 18-20-year-olds a real, if more involved, path to concealed carry through the provisional license rather than simply excluding them until 21, a structural difference from a state that would just require the standard optional permit at a younger age.

Sources

- Kansas rainwater harvesting rules: Survival Sullivan; GMD 4 Kansas Water Law Summary
- Kansas prior appropriation water law: Kansas Department of Agriculture
- Kansas permitless carry (2015) and 18-20 provisional license: Alien Gear Holsters; Protect With Bear

Kansas: Local Resources

Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM)

KDEM's Training Section provides training and support to each county's own emergency management staff and state emergency-support-function partners, helping every county build and sustain its own local training program rather than running response centrally.

Where to find it: kansastag.gov/498/Training, under the Kansas Adjutant General's Department.

K-State Research and Extension: Master Gardener Program

K-State Research and Extension runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site.

- **Kansas Extension Master Gardener Program:** 40 to 50 hours of horticulture instruction traded for ongoing volunteer time, active in 73 of Kansas's 105 counties. In 2021 alone, Kansas Master Gardener volunteers logged more than 91,000 hours, valued at over \$2.6 million.

Where to find it: hnr.k-state.edu lists participating counties.

CERT: organized county by county

Kansas's CERT programs run through individual county emergency management offices, including active programs in Douglas, Johnson, Sedgwick, and Riley counties among others, each teaching the standard fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical curriculum.

No single statewide CERT brand

Unlike states covered elsewhere on this site with one centrally branded CERT program, Kansas's CERT training is delivered independently by each county's emergency management office. Residents should check with their own county's office for the nearest active team and its schedule.

Where to find it: search “[your county] Kansas CERT” or check your county’s emergency management webpage directly.

Sources

- KDEM training and county support structure: Kansas Adjutant General’s Department
- Kansas Extension Master Gardener Program scale and county coverage: K-State Research and Extension
- Kansas county-level CERT programs: Douglas County; Sedgwick County

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Kansas: 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 2007 Greensburg tornado

Metric	Figure
Date	May 4, 2007
Rating	EF5, the first tornado ever rated under the newly implemented Enhanced Fujita Scale
Peak winds	~205 mph
Maximum width	1.7 mi
Duration on the ground	65 minutes
Deaths	11-12 (sources vary slightly)
Injuries	63
Town destroyed	95% of Greensburg (961 homes/businesses destroyed, 216 with major damage, 307 with minor damage)
Damage	\$250 million

A near-total loss, not a partial one

Most tornado case studies on this site describe severe but partial destruction across a city or county. Greensburg is the clearest example on the site of a near-total loss: 95% of an entire town of 1,400 people gone in about an hour. It’s the scenario this manual’s go-bag and shelter guidance is built for at its most literal.

The Ogallala Aquifer: the standing risk behind the next Dust Bowl

Metric	Figure
Historical Dust Bowl frequency, western Kansas	A Dust-Bowl-severity drought occurs roughly 3-4 times per century on its own, per paleoclimatic data
Projected Ogallala Aquifer depletion	Some estimates project ~70% depletion within 50 years
Trend direction	Water levels are mostly in decline from Kansas southward
Compounding factors cited by researchers	Historic drought, aquifer depletion, climate change, and existing farm-program incentives, acting together

A slow risk, not an event

Unlike Greensburg’s tornado, the Ogallala Aquifer’s decline has no single date attached to it. It’s a standing condition, the same category as California’s water stress or Arizona’s Colorado River shortage covered elsewhere on this site, that raises the odds of a future acute drought event compounding on top of an already-reduced water supply, rather than a disaster with a start and end date of its own.

Sources

- 2007 Greensburg tornado data: Wikipedia; Fox Weather
- Ogallala Aquifer depletion projections and Dust Bowl recurrence data: Kansas Reflector; Yale E360