

# Louisiana: Overview

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

## Hurricane Katrina: an engineering failure as much as a storm

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Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, and while the storm itself was severe, most of New Orleans's catastrophic flooding came from a different cause: levees and floodwalls failed in more than 50 locations around the city, built on weak soils with pilings driven too shallow, several failing below their own design height. The flooding submerged 80% of New Orleans and 95% of neighboring St. Bernard Parish. More than 1,390 people died, total damage reached roughly \$125 billion, and roughly 400,000 residents never returned to the city permanently. See the Risks page for the full data.

## Coastal land loss: a standing crisis, not a single event

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Louisiana's other defining risk isn't a storm at all, it's the ongoing loss of the coastline itself. The state holds more than 45% of the intertidal wetlands in the lower 48 states, yet accounts for more than 90% of the nation's total coastal wetland loss. Between 1932 and 2000 alone, an estimated 1.2 million acres of Louisiana's coastal wetlands disappeared, and another 448,000 acres are projected to be lost by 2050. This is a genuinely different kind of risk from a hurricane, permanent, cumulative, and directly connected to how much storm surge protection the coastline can still provide.

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

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The manual's Tier structure and the skill guides apply without modification. What's different in Louisiana: hurricane evacuation planning needs to account for the reality that levee and floodwall protection, even where it exists, isn't guaranteed to hold, and coastal and near-coastal households should understand that the wetlands that once buffered storm surge are disappearing, meaning the same storm today can push further inland than an equivalent storm decades ago.

## Sources

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- Hurricane Katrina deaths, levee failures, and damage: History.com; The Data Center
- Louisiana coastal wetland loss statistics: USGS; Restore or Retreat

# Louisiana: Laws & Legal Considerations

## Rainwater harvesting: broadly permitted statewide

Louisiana law permits collecting rainwater for any legal purpose, with comparatively light state-level regulation.

| Rule            | Louisiana                                                                                           |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Source water    | Rooftop or other catchment                                                                          |
| Permitted uses  | Any legal purpose, provided the collection system doesn't interfere with other water rights holders |
| Permit required | No general state permit for typical residential systems                                             |
| Local variation | Parish-level rules vary; some parishes have tighter restrictions, others few or none                |

*Where to find it:* your parish government for any local rules; the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality for broader water conservation guidance.

## Water rights: the only civil-law legal system in the United States

Every other state covered on this site operates under the English common law tradition. Louisiana is the sole exception, its entire legal system, not just water law, descends from French and Spanish civil law, most directly the Napoleonic Code.

| Concept                 | How it works in Louisiana                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governing framework     | The Louisiana Civil Code, not common-law precedent, is the primary source of property and water law                                                                                                     |
| Riparian owners' rights | A riparian landowner may make reasonable use of adjacent surface water, and may extend that same access to a non-riparian owner for agricultural or aquacultural purposes within the state              |
| Practical effect        | Louisiana's outcome looks similar to common-law riparian reasonable use in other states, but it's derived from a genuinely different legal tradition and codified civil provisions rather than case law |

### Why this distinction matters beyond water law

Louisiana’s civil law heritage affects far more than water rights, it shapes contract law, property law, and inheritance law throughout the state in ways that can surprise people used to how the other 49 states’ common-law systems work. Water rights specifically have historically generated relatively little litigation in Louisiana, reflecting the state’s traditional water abundance, but the underlying legal framework is worth understanding on its own terms rather than assuming it works exactly like a “normal” riparian state.

*Where to find it:* Louisiana Revised Statutes Title 9 (Civil Code-Ancillaries) codifies riparian rights specifically.

## Permitless carry since July 2024

Louisiana adopted permitless carry in July 2024, one of the more recent states to do so, with a notable age gap between the permitless standard and its optional permit.

| Requirement                             | Detail                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Standard                                | Permitless carry, concealed or open, for anyone 18+ legally eligible to possess a firearm, residents and non-residents alike                                                                                                      |
| Optional Concealed Handgun Permit (CHP) | Requires being 21+; \$125 fee, valid 5 years, \$62.50 renewal (start 90 days before expiration)                                                                                                                                   |
| Why get the optional CHP anyway         | Reciprocity in roughly 37 other states that don't recognize Louisiana's permitless carry; also satisfies the federal Gun-Free School Zones Act exemption near K-12 schools, the same gap noted on Arizona's and Tennessee's pages |

## Sources

- Louisiana rainwater harvesting rules: Survival Sullivan
- Louisiana’s civil law water rights framework: Louisiana Revised Statutes Title 9, §9:1102.1; Water Rights and Water Policy in Louisiana
- Louisiana permitless carry and optional CHP: Alien Gear Holsters; Protect With Bear

# Louisiana: Local Resources

## GOHSEP

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The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness coordinates Louisiana's statewide emergency management, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, with a natural emphasis on hurricane readiness given the state's coastal exposure.

*Where to find it:* [gohsep.la.gov](http://gohsep.la.gov).

## LSU AgCenter: Louisiana's version of the other states' land-grant Extension programs

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The LSU AgCenter runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site, organized at the parish level, Louisiana's equivalent of counties.

- **Louisiana Master Gardener Program:** a 40-hour training course, a passing exam score, and a 40-hour volunteer internship to become certified, delivered through 29 individual parish-level programs.

*Where to find it:* [lsuagcenter.com](http://lsuagcenter.com) lists the program by parish.

## CERT: coordinated through GOHSEP at the parish level

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Louisiana's CERT programs are coordinated through GOHSEP, with training delivered locally by parish-level emergency management offices.

### Terminology note

Louisiana uses "parish" where every other state covered on this site uses "county," a holdover from the state's civil law and French colonial history. Searching "[your parish] CERT" is the equivalent of the "[your county] CERT" search suggested on other states' pages.

*Where to find it:* [gohsep.la.gov](http://gohsep.la.gov) for statewide coordination; your parish's emergency management office for local training schedules.

## Sources

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- GOHSEP structure and mission: GOHSEP
- LSU AgCenter Master Gardener Program requirements and parish reach: LSU AgCenter

# Louisiana: 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.

## Hurricane Katrina (2005)

| Metric                                        | Figure                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Total deaths (most sources)                   | 1,390+                                                         |
| Total deaths (some Louisiana-specific counts) | 1,500+                                                         |
| Total damage                                  | ~\$125 billion                                                 |
| Levee/floodwall failure locations             | 50+                                                            |
| Share of New Orleans flooded                  | 80%                                                            |
| Share of St. Bernard Parish flooded           | 95%                                                            |
| Residents who never returned permanently      | ~400,000                                                       |
| Leading causes of death                       | Drowning (~40%), injury/trauma (~25%), heart conditions (~11%) |

### Why the death toll figure varies

Different sources count deaths across different geographic scopes and time windows, some limited to direct storm/flood deaths in the immediate aftermath, others including a broader count of Louisiana residents whose deaths were ultimately attributed to the disaster over a longer period. Both figures are credible; they answer slightly different questions about scope and timeframe, not a factual dispute.

## Coastal land loss: an ongoing, standing crisis

| Metric                                                                  | Figure                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Share of lower-48 intertidal wetlands in Louisiana                      | >45%                               |
| Share of the nation's total coastal wetland loss occurring in Louisiana | >90%                               |
| Acres lost, 1932-2000                                                   | ~1.2 million                       |
| Additional acres projected lost by 2050                                 | ~448,000                           |
| Historical average loss rate, 1985-2010                                 | 16.6 sq mi/year                    |
| Current average loss rate                                               | 10.9 sq mi/year (6,944 acres/year) |

### The 'football field an hour' statistic, precisely

The widely repeated claim that Louisiana loses “a football field of land every hour” is accurate as a 25-year average specifically for 1985-2010, not as a description of a constant, ongoing rate happening in real time today. Louisiana has never lost land at a literal steady hourly clip; the rate varies significantly year to year depending on storms and other factors, and the current average (10.9 sq mi/year) is meaningfully lower than the 1985-2010 average (16.6 sq mi/year). The land loss is real and severe either way, but the specific “every hour” framing describes a historical average, not a live rate.

## What these two have in common

Hurricane Katrina and Louisiana’s coastal land loss are connected in a direct, physical way: the coastal wetlands that have been disappearing for decades once provided a natural buffer against storm surge, meaning the same category of storm pushes further inland and does more damage today than it would have when more of that buffer still existed.

## Sources

- Hurricane Katrina death toll, levee failures, and damage: History.com; The Data Center; Britannica
- Louisiana coastal land loss statistics and the football-field rate: USGS; WWL-TV Verify; Restore or Retreat