

Minnesota: Overview

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

The 1997 Red River flood: catastrophic damage, zero deaths

In April 1997, the Red River of the North crested at 54 feet in Grand Forks, 5 feet above the National Weather Service's own worst-case estimate, flooding East Grand Forks, Minnesota and neighboring Grand Forks, North Dakota so completely that all but eight homes in East Grand Forks were damaged. More than 50,000 people evacuated, and total damage reached \$3.5-3.6 billion, at the time the eighth-costliest flood in U.S. history. Despite the scale, no deaths resulted, a genuine success story for early warning and evacuation that stands in useful contrast to disasters elsewhere on this site where warning time or evacuation execution fell short. See the Risks page for the full data.

The 1991 Halloween Blizzard: a storm that broke its own category

On October 31, 1991, a blizzard dropped 28.4 inches of snow on the Twin Cities and 36.9 inches on Duluth, still the largest single-storm snowfall total in Minnesota history more than three decades later. The storm killed roughly 20-22 people and arrived astonishingly early in the season, an unusual combination of scale and timing that caught much of the state unprepared for a storm of that magnitude in October.

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 Minnesota: households along the Red River Valley and other flood-prone waterways should take early evacuation orders seriously, 1997 shows how effective that response can be, and winter storm preparedness needs to start before the conventional winter season does, the Halloween Blizzard demonstrates that Minnesota's worst snowstorms don't wait for a calendar date.

Sources

- 1997 Red River flood damage, crest height, and evacuation figures: Wikipedia, sourced to NWS; Grand Forks County Historical Society
- 1991 Halloween Blizzard snowfall and death toll: MNopedia; Minnesota DNR

BY STATE › MINNESOTA

Minnesota: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: legal and encouraged, but with a real approval step

Minnesota’s Department of Natural Resources actively encourages rainwater harvesting as a conservation practice, but the actual installation process is more involved than the simple permit-free rule most other states covered on this site use.

Rule	Minnesota
Source water	Roof surfaces made of hard, impervious material specifically
Permitted uses	Non-potable
Installation requirement	Commissioner approval is required to install, build, change, or fix a rainwater-catching system
Underlying rule	Minn. Stat. §4714.1602.7.4

Why this is a meaningfully different process than most states covered so far

Most states covered on this site let a resident install a basic rooftop rain barrel with no state involvement at all. Minnesota’s commissioner-approval requirement is a genuine, if modest, additional step, worth planning for before assuming a simple rain barrel needs no state-level sign-off.

Where to find it: the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (dnr.state.mn.us) administers approval and general water law guidance.

Water rights: riparian, comparatively permissive next to Western states

Minnesota follows the common-law riparian doctrine, limited by reasonable use, the same broad family as most Midwestern and Eastern states covered on this site.

Concept	How it works in Minnesota
Who holds the right	Owners of land riparian to a water source
Governing principle	Reasonable use for domestic, agricultural, and manufacturing purposes

Where to find it: the Minnesota DNR administers water rights and appropriation permits statewide.

Permit to Carry: required, unlike some neighboring states

Minnesota requires an actual Permit to Carry, a meaningful contrast with neighboring states like Indiana and Ohio’s permitless systems covered elsewhere on this site.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	A Permit to Carry is required to carry a handgun in public at all, concealed or not
Minimum age	21
Training required	Certified handgun safety training within one year of application or renewal
Issuing authority	The county sheriff where the applicant resides (nonresidents may apply to any Minnesota county)
Cost and validity	\$100 initial fee (capped by law), \$75 renewal, valid 5 years
Processing time	Up to 30 days

One practical benefit of holding the permit

A Minnesota Permit to Carry holder doesn’t need a separate Permit to Purchase when buying a firearm, the carry permit itself satisfies that requirement.

Sources

- Minnesota rainwater harvesting rules and commissioner approval requirement: Rain Harvest Pro; AllowedHere
- Minnesota riparian water rights: State Regs Today
- Minnesota Permit to Carry requirements: Minnesota Dept. of Public Safety; Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus

Minnesota: Local Resources

HSEM: no single branded consumer campaign, organized by audience instead

The Minnesota Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, formed in 2003 by merging the state's emergency management and homeland security offices, organizes its public-facing preparedness content by audience rather than under one branded campaign name, similar to the approach on Virginia's and Arizona's pages.

Where the content actually lives

HSEM's preparedness section is split into distinct personal and family, community, and business preparedness pages, each with its own tailored guidance, rather than a single unified household checklist.

Where to find it: dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/programs/prep.

University of Minnesota Extension: Minnesota's version of the other states' land-grant Extension programs

UMN Extension runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site.

- **Master Gardener Volunteer Program:** a required Core Course plus 50 hours of public horticulture education and outreach in the first year (the internship year runs January-December, with applications due October 1), then at least 25 volunteer hours and 5-12 continuing-education hours annually (varying by county) to maintain certification.

Where to find it: extension.umn.edu lists the program by county.

CERT: supported through HSEM and FEMA local sponsor partnerships

Minnesota's CERT program operates year-round through local sponsor partners, with HSEM and FEMA providing support, covering preparedness activities, event assistance, and disaster site deployment when needed.

Where to find it: dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/programs lists current CERT and community preparedness programs.

Sources

- HSEM structure and preparedness program organization: Minnesota Dept. of Public Safety
- UMN Extension Master Gardener Program requirements: UMN Extension
- Minnesota CERT program structure: League of Minnesota Cities

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Minnesota: 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 1997 Red River flood: a disaster with no fatalities

Metric	Figure
Deaths	0
Total damage (Red River region)	\$3.5 billion
Damage in the immediate Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area	\$3.6 billion
Crest height at Grand Forks	54 ft (5 ft above the NWS's own worst-case estimate)
People evacuated	50,000+
East Grand Forks homes damaged	All but 8
Floodwater extent inland	3+ mi
National ranking at the time	8th costliest flood in U.S. history

Why zero deaths from a flood this severe is worth highlighting

A flood that exceeded the National Weather Service’s own worst-case crest prediction by 5 feet, flooded nearly every home in an entire city, and forced 50,000 people to evacuate could easily have been fatal on a large scale. That it wasn’t reflects effective advance warning and evacuation execution, a useful contrast to some other disasters covered on this site where warning time or evacuation compliance fell short.

The 1991 Halloween Blizzard: still Minnesota’s snowfall record-holder

Metric	Figure
Date	October 31-November 1, 1991
Twin Cities snowfall total	28.4 in
Duluth snowfall total	36.9 in, still the largest single-storm total in Minnesota history
Deaths	~20-22
Injuries	100+
Damage	~\$11.7 million
Peak wind gusts	60 mph
Temperature drop	Into the teens, with the Twin Cities airport hitting -3°F, the earliest sub-zero reading on record at the time
Duluth continuous snowfall duration	72 hours straight

The storm still holds Minnesota’s records for both highest single-storm snowfall total and highest 24-hour snowfall total, more than three decades on, a useful reminder that record-setting weather events don’t automatically get surpassed just because time passes.

What these two have in common

The Red River flood and the Halloween Blizzard demonstrate opposite outcomes from Minnesota’s severe weather extremes, one a catastrophic-scale disaster handled well enough to avoid fatalities, the other a storm whose sheer unexpectedness, both in scale and timing, contributed directly to its death toll. Both argue for the same practical lesson: take official warnings seriously regardless of the calendar or how unlikely a worst-case scenario seems.

Sources

- 1997 Red River flood damage, crest, and evacuation data: Wikipedia, sourced to NWS; NWS flood assessment

- 1991 Halloween Blizzard snowfall, deaths, and records: MNopedia; Minnesota DNR