

Nebraska: Overview

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

The 2014 Pilger twin tornadoes: a hazard type new to the site

On June 16, 2014, the small town of Pilger, population under 350, took a direct hit from two tornadoes on the ground side by side at the same time, an EF4 and an EF2, a genuinely rare configuration. The larger tornado alone destroyed 75% of the town, including its entire business district, and the event killed two people and injured 20. This is the first tornado case study on this site involving simultaneous parallel tornadoes rather than one storm or a sequence of separate ones. See the Risks page for the full data.

The March 2019 bomb cyclone flood: one of the costliest inland floods on record

A rapid-intensification “bomb cyclone” in March 2019 combined record snowmelt with heavy rain on ground still frozen from an exceptionally cold February, sending a wall of water and ice through Nebraska’s river systems. The ice-choked Niobrara River burst through and destroyed the Spencer Dam entirely, and three-fourths of Nebraska’s 93 counties declared a state of emergency. NOAA estimated the total multi-state damage at \$10.8 billion, one of the costliest inland flood events ever recorded in the U.S. 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 Nebraska: tornado shelter planning needs to account for the real possibility of more than one tornado on the ground in the same area at once, not just sequential storms, and this manual’s dam-failure and river-flood guidance carries extra weight given that an entire dam here failed under conditions many residents hadn’t planned around, ice-choked rivers in late winter, not the more commonly anticipated spring or summer flood pattern.

Sources

- 2014 Pilger tornado data: Wikipedia; Omaha World-Herald
- March 2019 Nebraska bomb cyclone flood data: Weather.com; NPR

Nebraska: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: legal and actively promoted

Nebraska law and its own universities actively promote rainwater harvesting for outdoor, domestic use.

Rule	Nebraska
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No, at the state level, for outdoor domestic use
Governing provision	Section P2912, Nonpotable Rainwater Collection and Distribution Systems
State posture	Actively encouraged, including by University of Nebraska Extension itself

Where to find it: University of Nebraska’s Water Center (water.unl.edu) publishes water use guidance.

Water rights: a genuine dual system, surface and groundwater governed separately

Nebraska is one of a small number of states covered on this site with two entirely distinct legal frameworks for surface water and groundwater, rather than one doctrine covering both or a hybrid blend.

Water type	Governing doctrine in Nebraska
Surface water	Prior appropriation ('first in time, first in right'), the same family as Utah/Oregon/Kansas/New Mexico
Groundwater	Correlative rights: all landowners share access to groundwater beneath their property, limited to reasonable use that doesn't harm neighboring rights
Local management	23 Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) manage groundwater regionally, a structure unique among the states covered on this site

Where to find it: the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the relevant local Natural Resources District.

Permitless carry since September 2023

Nebraska became the 27th constitutional-carry state when LB 77 took effect in September 2023.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, concealed, for anyone 21+ legally eligible to possess a firearm
ID requirement	Must carry valid government-issued ID while carrying
Disclosure requirement	Must immediately disclose to law enforcement or emergency personnel that you're carrying, upon contact
Optional permit	Remains available through State Patrol for reciprocity in states that don't recognize Nebraska's permitless standard
Handgun purchase note	A handgun certificate or concealed carry permit is still required to purchase a handgun, even in a private sale, separate from the carry question itself

A live 2026 legislative debate

LB 1237, introduced in 2026, would standardize “gun-free” designations for the State Capitol and its surrounding grounds. This is a pending proposal, not enacted law; confirm current status if reading this later.

Sources

- Nebraska rainwater harvesting rules: Salt & Prepper
- Nebraska’s dual water rights system: University of Nebraska College of Law; Midwest Ag Law
- Nebraska permitless carry (LB 77, 2023) and handgun-purchase certificate requirement: Protect With Bear; 88 Tactical

[BY STATE](#) › [NEBRASKA](#)

Nebraska: Local Resources

NEMA: Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

NEMA operates under Nebraska's Military Department and coordinates statewide emergency planning, training, and public outreach, including its own Citizen Corps community-outreach program.

Where to find it: nema.nebraska.gov.

Nebraska Extension: Master Gardener Volunteer Program

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site, in place since 1976.

- **Nebraska Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program:** 40 hours of initial education plus a 70%-or-higher open-book test to become a Trainee, then 40 hours of volunteer activity to become a full Volunteer. Classes run twice yearly, starting in late January and October, through local county extension offices.

Where to find it: mastergardener.unl.edu lists training sites by county.

CERT through NEMA

Nebraska's CERT program is delivered through NEMA and trains volunteers in fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations, free of charge to anyone with a personal or professional interest in disaster readiness.

Where to find it: nema.nebraska.gov/citizen-corps.

Sources

- NEMA structure and Citizen Corps program: Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
- Nebraska Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program requirements: University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- Nebraska CERT training: Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

BY STATE › NEBRASKA

Nebraska: 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 Pilger twin tornadoes

Metric	Figure
Date	June 16, 2014
Configuration	Two tornadoes on the ground simultaneously, side by side
Larger tornado rating/winds	EF4, 166-200 mph
Smaller tornado rating	EF2
Deaths	2
Injuries	20
Pilger destroyed	75% of the town, including 100% of its business district
Pilger population at the time	Under 350

A hazard configuration new to the site

Every other tornado case study on this site involves one tornado, or a sequence of separate tornadoes across a wider outbreak. Pilger’s twin tornadoes were genuinely simultaneous and side by side, a rare enough configuration that it drew national attention specifically for that reason, not just its damage total.

The March 2019 bomb cyclone flood

Metric	Figure
Trigger	Rapid-intensification 'bomb cyclone' (Winter Storm Ulmer), March 13, 2019
Mechanism	Record snowmelt plus heavy rain on ground still frozen from exceptional cold
Deaths (NE + IA)	3
Nebraska homes affected	7,000+
Nebraska damage	\$2.7 billion
Total multi-state damage	\$10.8 billion, one of the costliest inland flood events on record in the U.S.
Counties declaring emergency	~70 of Nebraska's 93 counties (three-fourths)
Notable infrastructure failure	Spencer Dam destroyed on the ice-choked Niobrara River

A dam failure most residents weren't planning around

Spencer Dam’s failure happened in mid-March, driven by ice jams and snowmelt rather than the summer thunderstorm flooding many households plan for. It’s a reminder that river and dam risk in Nebraska isn’t confined to one season.

Sources

- 2014 Pilger tornado data: Wikipedia; Omaha World-Herald
- March 2019 Nebraska bomb cyclone flood data: Weather.com; NPR