

New Hampshire: Overview

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

The Great Hurricane of 1938: often called New Hampshire's worst disaster

On September 21, 1938, a hurricane that struck New England with almost no warning, this was decades before organized hurricane forecasting, is widely considered the worst natural disaster in New Hampshire's history. Connecticut's page on this site covers the storm's broader Southern New England death toll (564-682 across the region); in New Hampshire specifically, 13 people died, and the storm's winds reached a stunning 163 mph atop Mount Washington, destroying the Cog Railway's trestle. Peterborough alone lost 10 bridges. See the Risks page for the full data.

The December 2008 ice storm: the most damaging storm in the state's grid history

On December 11-12, 2008, freezing rain coated New Hampshire in ice heavy enough that utilities at the time called it the most damaging storm ever recorded on the state's power grid. More than 400,000 customers lost power, some for as long as two weeks, and 780 utility poles and 1,300 transformers were destroyed outright. 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 New Hampshire: this manual's extended-outage guidance is directly relevant here given the 2008 ice storm's two-week restoration timeline for some customers, and coastal and mountain wind exposure, as Mount Washington's 1938 reading shows, can be extreme even in a state most people don't associate with hurricane risk.

Sources

- 1938 Hurricane New Hampshire data: New England Historical Society; Wikipedia
- December 2008 ice storm data: Wikipedia; Union Leader

New Hampshire: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: unrestricted and actively promoted

New Hampshire places no restriction on outdoor rainwater harvesting and actively promotes it through a dedicated state program.

Rule	New Hampshire
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No, for outdoor applications
State program	'Soak Up the Rain,' run by the Department of Environmental Services, promotes rain barrels and similar water conservation practices

Where to find it: the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (des.nh.gov) runs Soak Up the Rain.

Water rights: reasonable-use riparian doctrine, under real strain

New Hampshire follows the reasonable-use version of riparian rights inherited from English common law: a landowner may use adjacent water so long as it doesn’t unreasonably interfere with another owner’s use, regardless of which use came first.

Concept	How it works in New Hampshire
Basic rule	Riparian landowners may make reasonable use of adjacent water; conflicts are resolved by reasonableness, not by priority date
Groundwater	Separately addressed under the state's Groundwater Protection Act
Known strain	Legal commentary has flagged that population growth and declining freshwater availability may eventually require modifying the reasonable-use system or introducing some form of allocation, though no such change has been enacted

Where to find it: the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services administers groundwater rights.

Permitless carry since 2017

New Hampshire has recognized permitless (constitutional) carry since February 2017.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, open or concealed, for anyone 18+ legally eligible to possess a firearm
Optional License to Carry (LTC)	Still issued to residents and non-residents on request, unchanged by the 2017 law, mainly useful for reciprocity while traveling

A real, if not yet resolved, water-law tension

New Hampshire’s water law hasn’t hit a crisis point the way some Western prior-appropriation states covered on this site have, but legal commentary has specifically flagged reasonable-use riparian doctrine as potentially inadequate for a state with rising population and finite freshwater. Worth watching, not yet an active constraint.

Sources

- New Hampshire rainwater harvesting and Soak Up the Rain: NH Department of Environmental Services; NTO Tank
- New Hampshire reasonable-use riparian water law: Texas Real Food; McLane Middleton
- New Hampshire permitless carry (2017): USA Gun Shop

New Hampshire: Local Resources

New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)

HSEM oversees statewide planning, preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation for all emergencies and disasters, from hurricanes and floods to severe winter storms and human-caused incidents.

Where to find it: hsem.dos.nh.gov.

UNH Extension: Master Gardener Program

University of New Hampshire Extension runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site, active since 1993.

- **New Hampshire Master Gardener Volunteer Program:** trains volunteers in gardening, plants, soil, and insects, who then bring that education to their communities through projects and public presentations.

Where to find it: extension.unh.edu lists upcoming training sessions.

CERT: independent town-level teams under HSEM

New Hampshire's CERT program is supported by HSEM, the NH State Citizen Corps Council, and individual towns, but delivered through independently organized town teams rather than one centralized curriculum body. Goffstown's team, formed in 2003, is the longest continuously operating CERT team in the state; other active teams include Merrimack, Bedford, Plaistow, and Nashua.

Town by town, not statewide

Like several other states covered on this site, New Hampshire's CERT coverage depends on whether your specific town has organized a team. Residents should check with their town's emergency management office directly rather than assuming statewide coverage.

Where to find it: hsem.dos.nh.gov, or search “[your town] NH CERT.”

Sources

- HSEM structure and mission: New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- UNH Master Gardener Program history: University of New Hampshire Extension
- New Hampshire town-level CERT programs: CERT-LA; Goffstown, NH

New Hampshire: 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 Great Hurricane of 1938

Metric	Figure
Date	September 21, 1938
New Hampshire deaths	13
Southern New England regional deaths	564-682 (see Connecticut's page for the full regional breakdown)
Peak wind, Mount Washington	163 mph, destroying the Cog Railway's trestle
Peterborough bridges destroyed	10
Regional damage (1938 dollars / 2024-adjusted)	\$306 million / ~\$4.7 billion

Why this is still called New Hampshire's worst disaster

This storm struck New England with almost no advance warning, decades before organized hurricane forecasting existed. That near-total surprise, more than the storm’s raw intensity alone, is why it’s remembered as uniquely catastrophic: nobody had the chance to prepare the way modern forecasting now allows for a storm of similar strength.

The December 2008 ice storm

Metric	Figure
Dates	December 11-12, 2008
Customers without power	400,000+
Longest restoration time	Up to 2 weeks for some customers
Utility poles destroyed	780
Transformers destroyed	1,300
Schools closed	450+
Deaths	4
Injuries	100+
Historical ranking	Called the most damaging storm in the state's power-grid history by utilities at the time

An outage duration worth planning around

Two weeks without power is a genuinely long outage, well past what a typical household’s stored supplies or a small generator’s fuel reserve is built for. This is the clearest New England example on the site of why this manual’s extended-outage guidance, not just its short-term outage guidance, matters even in a state without hurricane-force coastal risk.

Sources

- 1938 Hurricane New Hampshire data: New England Historical Society; Wikipedia
- December 2008 ice storm data: Wikipedia; Union Leader