

North Dakota: Overview

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

The 1997 Red River flood: Grand Forks's own story

Minnesota's page on this site covers the 1997 Red River flood's broader regional numbers, a \$3.5 billion disaster largely without direct fatalities thanks to a massive evacuation. Grand Forks, North Dakota, sits at the center of that same flood with a story distinctly its own: the Red River crested at 54 feet, well past the National Weather Service's 49-foot worst-case estimate, forcing Mayor Pat Owens to order more than 50,000 people out of the city. In the middle of that evacuation, a major fire broke out downtown and burned through 11 buildings and 60 apartment units before firefighters could reach it through the floodwater. Recovery required removing entire neighborhoods permanently to build a new \$409 million federal levee system. See the Risks page for the full data.

The Blizzard of 1966: widely considered North Dakota's worst storm

Over March 2-4, 1966, a blizzard parked over North Dakota for three days, driving winds up to 70 mph into mountainous snow drifts across the state. It's often identified as the worst recorded storm in North Dakota history specifically because of how long it lingered, killing at least 18 people in the state and surrounding region along with thousands of livestock. 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 North Dakota: a flood evacuation can create its own secondary emergencies, as Grand Forks's downtown fire during the 1997 flood shows, so this manual's guidance about not assuming firefighting response will be available or fast during a major flood applies directly here, and extreme, multi-day blizzard risk is a genuine, historically severe hazard in its own right, not just a routine winter inconvenience.

Sources

- 1997 Red River flood, Grand Forks-specific data: Wikipedia; City of Grand Forks
- Blizzard of 1966 data: State Historical Society of North Dakota; All That's Interesting

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North Dakota: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: legal for outdoor domestic use

North Dakota permits rainwater harvesting for outdoor, domestic use without a state water rights permit, though larger-scale use crosses into permit territory.

Rule	North Dakota
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required for typical domestic/outdoor use	No
Permit threshold	Irrigation of more than 5 acres, or industrial/municipal/rural water-system use, may require a water rights permit
Structure/tank permits	A building permit may still be required for structures or underground tanks, separate from the water rights question

Where to find it: the North Dakota Department of Water Resources (dwr.nd.gov).

Water rights: prior appropriation, with domestic use generally exempt

North Dakota follows prior appropriation, the same “first in time, first in right” doctrine as Utah, Montana, Kansas, and several other states covered on this site.

Concept	How it works in North Dakota
Basic rule	The earliest-dated appropriator holds first claim during a shortage
Ownership	All waters within the state belong to the public and are subject to appropriation for beneficial use (N.D. Century Code §61-01-01)
Domestic and farm use	Generally doesn't require a permit, though obtaining one voluntarily can help establish a documented water right

Where to find it: the North Dakota Department of Water Resources administers appropriation permits.

Permitless carry since 2017

North Dakota has recognized constitutional carry since House Bill 1169 took effect August 1, 2017.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, concealed, for anyone 18+ (resident or non-resident) with a valid driver's license or state ID, legally eligible to possess a firearm
Disclosure requirement	Anyone carrying under the permitless standard must inform any officer who makes contact (e.g., during a traffic stop) that they're carrying, or they're in violation of state law
Optional permit	Remains available for reciprocity purposes

Sources

- North Dakota rainwater harvesting rules: Primal Survivor
- North Dakota prior appropriation water law: North Dakota Century Code §61-01-01; North Dakota Department of Water Resources
- North Dakota permitless carry (HB 1169, 2017) and disclosure duty: USSCA

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North Dakota: Local Resources

North Dakota Department of Emergency Services (NDDDES)

NDDDES coordinates statewide emergency planning, response, recovery, and mitigation, drawing directly on the state's history of severe flooding and blizzards.

Where to find it: North Dakota Department of Emergency Services.

NDSU Extension: Master Gardener Program

North Dakota State University Extension runs the same category of program as every other state covered on this site.

- **NDSU Extension Master Gardener Program:** a 40-hour horticultural core course, followed by 48 hours of volunteer service over a two-year period to become certified. Maintaining certification afterward requires 20 volunteer hours and 10 continuing-education hours annually. Available through a limited number of participating counties (26 as of recent cycles), with a program fee of \$225.

Where to find it: ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/master-gardener lists participating counties.

Not every county participates every cycle

NDSU's Master Gardener Program accepts a limited number of applicants across a specific list of participating counties each cycle, not a fixed statewide roster. Check the current year's list before assuming your county is included.

CERT

North Dakota's CERT training follows the standard FEMA curriculum, delivered through local emergency management offices in coordination with NDDDES.

Where to find it: your local county emergency management office, or NDDDES directly.

Sources

- NDSU Extension Master Gardener Program requirements and participating counties: NDSU Agriculture

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North Dakota: 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.

Grand Forks and the 1997 Red River flood

Metric	Figure
Grand Forks crest	54 ft, well above the NWS's 49 ft worst-case estimate
People evacuated from Grand Forks	50,000+
Floodwater inland reach	3+ mi past the river's normal banks
Downtown fire during the flood	11 buildings and 60 apartment units burned before firefighters could reach the blaze
Post-flood levee system cost	\$409 million (federally funded)
Regional total damage (Red River basin)	\$3.5 billion (see Minnesota's page for the full regional breakdown)

A fire the flood itself made worse

Grand Forks’s downtown fire broke out in the middle of the evacuation, and floodwater actively slowed firefighters’ ability to reach it, letting it consume 11 buildings before being contained. It’s a clear example of how one disaster can directly disable the response capacity needed for a second, simultaneous emergency.

The Blizzard of 1966

Metric	Figure
Dates	March 2-4, 1966
Duration	3 days
Peak winds	Up to 70 mph
Deaths (ND and surrounding region)	18+
Livestock losses	Thousands
Historical ranking	Widely considered the worst recorded storm in North Dakota history

Duration, not just intensity, made this the worst on record

The 1966 blizzard is remembered as North Dakota’s worst storm largely because of how long it persisted, three full days of sustained high winds and heavy snow, rather than any single moment of extreme intensity. A shorter, more intense storm might have produced less cumulative damage than this one’s sheer duration did.

Sources

- 1997 Red River flood, Grand Forks-specific data: Wikipedia; City of Grand Forks
- Blizzard of 1966 data: State Historical Society of North Dakota; All That’s Interesting