

South Dakota: Overview

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

The 1972 Black Hills flood: rainfall plus a dam failure

On the night of June 9-10, 1972, nearly 15 inches of rain fell in about six hours near Nemo in the Black Hills, overwhelming Rapid Creek and other waterways. Canyon Lake Dam, clogged with debris from the flooding, failed outright late that evening, sending a wall of water through Rapid City. The combination, extreme rainfall on top of a dam failure, made this the most detrimental flood in South Dakota's history and one of the deadliest floods in U.S. history, killing 238 people. See the Risks page for the full data.

The 2015 Delmont tornado: a small town hit directly

On May 10, 2015, an EF2 tornado tracked more than 16 miles through southeastern South Dakota and struck the small town of Delmont directly, severely damaging or destroying 44 houses and leaving the entire town without power and water for two days. It's a useful modern case study precisely because of its scale: a single tornado can disable an entire small town's basic utilities for days even without producing a large death toll. 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 South Dakota: this manual's guidance about not relying on a single point of infrastructure failure, like a dam, applies directly given Rapid City's history, and Delmont's two-day utility outage after a single tornado is a reminder that a small town's entire infrastructure can be knocked out at once in a way a larger city's redundancy might partially absorb.

Sources

- 1972 Black Hills flood data: Wikipedia; National Weather Service
- 2015 Delmont tornado data: South Dakota Magazine; South Dakota Response

South Dakota: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: unrestricted

South Dakota places no permit requirement on residential rainwater harvesting for typical household use.

Rule	South Dakota
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required	No, for typical residential collection
Permitted uses	Non-potable, typically irrigation and similar uses

Where to find it: the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (danr.sd.gov) administers water rights generally.

Water rights: a genuine hybrid, riparian priority for domestic use, prior appropriation for everything else

South Dakota is a hybrid state, combining both systems rather than choosing one, and the split is defined by use type rather than geography.

Use type	Governing doctrine in South Dakota
Small domestic use	Riparian-style priority: individual domestic water use takes preference over other uses without needing an appropriation filing
All other uses (irrigation, industrial, municipal, etc.)	Prior appropriation, 'first in time, first in right,' with priority set by the date an application is filed
Ownership	All water within the state belongs to the people of South Dakota; the right to use it is acquired by appropriation as provided by law

Where to find it: the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources administers appropriation permits.

Permitless carry since 2019

South Dakota has recognized constitutional carry since July 2019.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, concealed, for anyone 18+ legally eligible to possess a firearm, regardless of state of residence
Optional permit	Remains available to residents and some non-residents for reciprocity while traveling

A genuinely different structure from a single-doctrine state

Most states covered on this site pick one water-rights doctrine and apply it across the board. South Dakota’s split by use type, rather than by water source or region, means the same river can be governed by two different legal standards depending on what the water is being used for.

Sources

- South Dakota rainwater harvesting and water rights administration: South Dakota DANR
- South Dakota’s hybrid riparian/prior-appropriation water law: Texas Real Food; South Dakota DENR
- South Dakota permitless carry (2019): USSCA

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South Dakota: Local Resources

South Dakota Office of Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management protects residents and property from natural, man-made, and technological disasters across the full cycle of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

Where to find it: South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

SDSU Extension: Master Gardener Volunteer Program

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

- **SDSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program:** develops gardening enthusiasts into research-based volunteer educators; maintaining certification requires 20 hours of service and 10 hours of continuing training annually.

Where to find it: extension.sdstate.edu.

CERT: Pennington County's program covers Rapid City and several neighboring counties

Pennington County, home to Rapid City and the site of the 1972 Black Hills flood, runs one of South Dakota's most established CERT programs: a 7-week course (6 weeks of instruction plus a week-7 simulated exercise), open to adults and teens 15+, twice yearly. Residents of neighboring Custer, Lawrence, Meade, and Fall River counties are also welcome to attend.

A regional hub, not full statewide coverage

Pennington County's CERT program extends its reach to several neighboring counties, a genuinely regional model, but residents elsewhere in South Dakota should still check for a closer program rather than assuming Pennington County's classes are the only option or cover the whole state.

Where to find it: pennco.org/cert.

Sources

- South Dakota Office of Emergency Management mission: South Dakota Department of Public Safety
- SDSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program requirements: South Dakota State University Extension
- Pennington County CERT program structure: Pennington County, SD

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South 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.

The 1972 Black Hills flood

Metric	Figure
Date	June 9-10, 1972
Rainfall near Nemo	~15 in in ~6 hours
Rainfall over 60 sq mi area	10+ in
Trigger	Canyon Lake Dam, clogged with debris, failed late on June 9
Deaths	238
Injuries	3,057
Homes destroyed	1,335+
Automobiles destroyed	5,000+
Damage (1972 / 2025-adjusted)	\$160 million / ~\$1.23 billion
Historical ranking	The most detrimental flood in South Dakota history and one of the deadliest floods in U.S. history

Rainfall alone didn't cause this; the dam failure did too

Extreme rainfall created the conditions, but the dam failure amplified the disaster into one of the deadliest floods in U.S. history. It’s a reminder that a piece of infrastructure meant to manage water can itself become the point of catastrophic failure once conditions exceed its design.

The 2015 Delmont tornado

Metric	Figure
Date	May 10, 2015
Rating	EF2
Peak winds	130 mph
Path width	400 yards
Path length	16+ mi
Injuries	9
Homes severely damaged/destroyed	44 (12 more damaged)
Power/water outage duration, entire town	2 days
Fire department	Destroyed, with hazardous debris scattered through town

Small-town scale, total impact

Delmont’s tornado didn’t approach the death toll of the 1972 flood, but it knocked out an entire town’s power and water for two full days and destroyed the local fire department that would normally respond to exactly this kind of emergency. In a small town, a single storm can disable the whole local response infrastructure at once.

Sources

- 1972 Black Hills flood data: Wikipedia; National Weather Service
- 2015 Delmont tornado data: South Dakota Magazine; South Dakota Response