

Vermont: Overview

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

Tropical Storm Irene (2011): Vermont's worst disaster since 1927

On August 28, 2011, Tropical Storm Irene dumped up to 11 inches of rain across Vermont, no longer a hurricane by the time it arrived, but still catastrophic. Officials called it the state's worst natural disaster since 1927, and it killed 6 people, destroyed or damaged over 2,400 roads, 800 homes and businesses, and 300 bridges including historic covered bridges, and cut off a dozen towns and villages entirely, some reachable only by helicopter delivering food and emergency supplies. See the Risks page for the full data.

July 2023: the same river system, a new record just 12 years later

Less than a dozen years after Irene, Vermont experienced flooding its own governor called "historic and catastrophic." The Winooski River at Montpelier crested at 21.35 feet, more than two feet above the crest Irene produced, downtown Montpelier under water again, this time second only to the legendary 1927 flood in the state's records. Unlike Irene, this flooding came from a slow, days-long rain event rather than a named storm, a reminder that the storm doesn't need a hurricane's name attached to produce a record-breaking result. 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 Vermont: this manual's guidance about towns being cut off entirely during a flood, not just individual homes flooding, applies directly here given Irene's helicopter resupply of isolated communities, and Vermont households should treat "record flood level" the way Maine's page frames it, a number that can be broken again within just over a decade, not a stable historical ceiling.

Sources

- Tropical Storm Irene Vermont data: Vermont Business Magazine; National Weather Service
- July 2023 Vermont flood data: Wikipedia; National Weather Service

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Vermont: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: legal outdoors, with a specific labeling requirement

Vermont permits rainwater harvesting for outdoor use without a permit, under standards adopted from the 2018 International Plumbing Code.

Rule	Vermont
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Permit required for rain barrels/aboveground cisterns	No, for outdoor use
Governing code	2018 International Plumbing Code, §1303
Labeling requirement	Any conveyance piping must be marked 'CAUTION: NONPOTABLE WATER - DO NOT DRINK'
Large withdrawals	Require a permit from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, even on your own property

Where to find it: the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (anr.vermont.gov).

Water rights: riparian reasonable-use

Vermont follows riparian doctrine: landowners whose property touches a natural body of water may make reasonable use of it, with reasonableness the only real limit on that right.

Concept	How it works in Vermont
Basic rule	A riparian landowner may make reasonable use of adjacent water, limited only by the reasonableness standard
Projects affecting water resources	May require approval from the riparian landowner or the Agency of Natural Resources, depending on the project

Where to find it: the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources administers water-related permitting.

Permitless carry since 1777, the original constitutional carry state

Vermont has never required a permit to carry a concealed handgun, at any point in its history, a distinction no other state covered on this site can claim.

Requirement	Detail
Standard	Permitless carry, open or concealed, for residents and non-residents alike who can legally possess a firearm
Constitutional basis	Article 16 of the Vermont Constitution, adopted in 1777, predating the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment
Permits issued	None; Vermont has never operated a carry-permit system to opt into

Not just an early adopter, the original

Every other permitless-carry state covered on this site adopted the standard within the last few decades, most since 2010. Vermont never had a permit requirement to repeal in the first place, making it structurally different from a state that switched to permitless carry rather than one that simply never left it.

Sources

- Vermont rainwater harvesting rules: Primal Survivor
- Vermont riparian water law: LegalFix
- Vermont’s 1777 constitutional carry provision: FirearmSelect

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Vermont: Local Resources

Vermont Emergency Management (VEM)

VEM coordinates statewide emergency planning, training, and CERT program support across Vermont's towns and cities.

Where to find it: vem.vermont.gov.

UVM Extension: Master Gardener Program

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

- **UVM Extension Master Gardener Program:** an application and background check are required, followed by a course each winter/spring (January-May) covering botany, soil fertility, and landscape design, then 40 hours of volunteer service to earn certification. Cost is \$400 for Vermont residents, \$550 for out-of-state.

Where to find it: uvm.edu/extension/mastergardener.

CERT: state-supported training, but independently run teams since 2020

Vermont's CERT Basic Training is a 20-hour classroom and hands-on course covering emergency traffic control, fire safety assistance, light search and rescue, and disaster medical assistance. Since February 1, 2020, individual CERT teams have operated as independent nonprofits rather than units managed directly by VEM for activation, insurance, equipment, and reimbursement, a structural change that lets teams fundraise and apply for grants on their own.

A genuinely different organizational model

Most states covered on this site run CERT either through a single state agency, county offices, or city departments. Vermont's 2020 shift to independent team nonprofits is a structurally distinct model: VEM still supports training, but day-to-day team operation and funding now sit with each team itself.

Where to find it: vem.vermont.gov/programs/cert.

Sources

- VEM CERT program structure and 2020 change: Vermont Emergency Management
- UVM Extension Master Gardener Program requirements: University of Vermont

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Vermont: 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.

Tropical Storm Irene (2011)

Metric	Figure
Date	August 28, 2011
Rainfall	Up to 11 in
Vermont deaths	6
Roads damaged/destroyed	2,400+
Homes/businesses destroyed	800
Bridges damaged/destroyed	300 (including historic covered bridges)
Power outages	117,000
Communities cut off entirely	13, resupplied by helicopter
Vermont damage	\$733 million
National damage total (all of Irene)	\$14.3 billion, the sixth-costliest hurricane in U.S. history
Historical ranking	Vermont's worst natural disaster since the 1927 flood

The July 2023 floods

Metric	Figure
Dates	July 9-12, 2023
Rainfall statewide	3-9 in over 48 hours
Highest single total	9.20 in, Calais, Washington County
Deaths	2
Damage	\$600 million+
Winooski River crest at Montpelier	21.35 ft, 2+ ft above Irene's crest at the same location
Historical ranking	Second only to the 1927 flood's 27.10 ft crest at Montpelier

A record broken in barely a decade, without a hurricane's name attached

Irene’s flooding came from a named tropical storm; the July 2023 flood came from an ordinary, if extreme, multi-day rain event with no storm name at all, yet it broke Irene’s own river-crest record at Montpelier by more than two feet. This is the same “recent record, not distant history” pattern flagged on Maine’s page (a 46-year gap there), except Vermont’s gap between record floods was under 12 years.

Sources

- Tropical Storm Irene Vermont data: Vermont Business Magazine; National Weather Service
- July 2023 Vermont flood data: Wikipedia; National Weather Service