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## Washington, D.C.: Overview

Everything in the main manual and the skill guides applies in Washington, D.C. exactly as written. What's different here is the specific hazard profile and the district's unusual legal status, a federal district with no state legislature, its own emergency management agency, and gun and water law shaped by that status rather than by a typical state code. This page is the starting point; the other three pages under D.C. go deeper on laws, local resources, and the data behind the risks named here.

### The August 2011 Virginia earthquake: damage nobody expected in a city that isn't supposed to have earthquakes

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A magnitude 5.8 earthquake centered near Mineral, Virginia, roughly 83 miles southwest of the district, shook Washington on August 23, 2011. D.C. isn't considered an earthquake-prone city, and that's exactly what made the damage instructive: the Washington Monument sustained more than 150 cracks, some deep enough to let daylight through, and closed for 32 months before reopening in May 2014 after a \$15 million repair, split between \$7.5 million in federal funds and a matching \$7.5 million donation. The Washington National Cathedral came off worse: three of its four central-tower corner spires were severely damaged, along with cracked flying buttresses and destroyed masonry, at an estimated \$34 million in damage that ordinary insurance didn't cover, since it doesn't cover earthquake damage. Restoration has run in phases since, funded entirely by private donations, with the Cathedral's own projection putting full completion around 2029, eighteen years after the quake. See the Risks page for the full data.

### The June 2012 derecho: one storm, a multi-day outage, and a heat wave that turned it dangerous

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A line of hurricane-force straight-line winds, gusting past 87 mph in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, tore through the region on the evening of June 29, 2012, with almost no advance warning: derechos develop fast and don't carry the days of lead time a hurricane does. Roughly 68,000 D.C. customers lost power, part of a multi-state outage that topped a million customers regionally, and utilities weren't back to 90% restoration in the district until days later. The timing made it worse than a typical summer outage: a heat wave settled in immediately behind the storm, with D.C.'s daily high staying at or above 95°F for over a week and peaking at 105°F on July 7, air conditioning down across much of the city the entire time. See the Risks page for the full data.

## What this means for how you use the rest of this manual

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The manual's Tier structure and the skill guides apply without modification. What's different in D.C.: this manual's Energy & Heat chapter assumes a heat wave and a power outage are separate risks that sometimes overlap; the 2012 derecho is a documented case of them arriving together with no warning, which is the harder planning case, not the easier one. And the 2011 earthquake is a reminder that this manual's Security & Shelter structural-safety guidance isn't just for households in an obviously seismic state: D.C.'s older masonry rowhouses and monuments weren't built to a seismic code, because nobody expected to need one, and the actual damage shows that mattered.

## Sources

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- 2011 Virginia earthquake, epicenter and magnitude: USGS
- Washington Monument closure and repair cost: National Park Service; TIME
- Washington National Cathedral damage and ongoing restoration: Washington National Cathedral; Washington Post
- June 2012 derecho wind speeds and regional impact: NWS service assessment; Wikipedia
- D.C.-area outage figures and heat wave data: NOAA/NWS; Energy.gov

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# Washington, D.C.: Laws & Legal Considerations

## Rainwater harvesting: legal, and directly discounted off your water bill

The District treats a rain barrel or cistern as green stormwater infrastructure worth paying you to install, not just a permitted hobby.

| Rule              | Washington, D.C.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Source water      | Rooftop or other catchment                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Permit required   | No permit needed for a standard rain barrel or cistern                                                                                                                                                           |
| Incentive program | RiverSmart Rewards: up to 55% off the DC Stormwater Fee and up to 20% off the Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge, both billed through DC Water, for qualifying green infrastructure installed after May 1, 2009 |
| Direct rebate     | Separate rain barrel rebate: \$2 per gallon of capacity (50-gallon minimum, screened inlet required) plus up to \$150 toward installation                                                                        |

*Where to find it:* the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment ([doee.dc.gov](http://doee.dc.gov)).

## Water rights: no riparian doctrine, because there’s effectively one water system

Unlike a state, D.C. doesn’t have a body of riparian or prior-appropriation case law governing private water use, because there’s almost nothing for such a doctrine to apply to: nearly the entire district is served by a single retail utility rather than private wells or diversions.

| Concept                 | How it works in D.C.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Basic framework         | No documented general riparian-rights doctrine distinct from a narrow statutory permit scheme                                                                                                                                                            |
| Waterfront construction | D.C. Code §47-2711 requires a permit and fee for filling, dredging, or building structures (like a wharf) along the Potomac or Anacostia, a construction rule, not a water-allocation doctrine                                                           |
| Retail supply           | DC Water (D.C. Water and Sewer Authority), an independent authority established in 1996, is the sole retail water and sewer utility                                                                                                                      |
| Interstate layer        | The Potomac River is coordinated through the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), a non-regulatory body with D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and federal commissioners, created by a 1940 interstate compact |

*Where to find it:* DC Water administers retail service; the ICPRB coordinates the interstate river basin.

## Concealed carry: shall-issue since 2017, but D.C. honors no other jurisdiction’s permit

D.C.’s concealed carry law changed fundamentally in 2017, but it remains an island in one specific way: it doesn’t reciprocate with anyone.

| Requirement | Detail                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Standard    | Shall-issue since Wrenn v. District of Columbia (D.C. Cir. 2017) struck down the prior good-reason/special-need requirement                                                                |
| Minimum age | 21                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Training    | 16-hour firearms training course covering District and federal firearms law, self-defense law, and marksmanship, plus 2 hours of live-fire range training with an MPD-certified instructor |
| Renewal     | 4-hour refresher course plus range requalification (70% accuracy required); license valid 2 years                                                                                          |
| Reciprocity | None: D.C. does not recognize a concealed carry license issued by any other state or jurisdiction                                                                                          |

**No reciprocity, in either direction, with any state**

Every state covered on this site's By State section has some concealed carry framework, and most recognize at least a handful of other states' permits. D.C. recognizes none. A valid permit from any of the 50 states doesn't authorize carrying in the District, and a D.C. license doesn't carry weight elsewhere either; anyone who might carry both in D.C. and while traveling needs to treat the two as entirely separate legal questions, not one credential that travels.

## Sources

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- Wrenn v. District of Columbia and D.C.'s shift to shall-issue: Wikipedia
- D.C. concealed carry eligibility requirements: Metropolitan Police Department
- D.C. concealed carry training hours, fees, and renewal requirements: Scrofano Law
- D.C.'s lack of reciprocity with other states: USCCA; NRA-ILA
- RiverSmart Rewards and rain barrel rebate program: D.C. Department of Energy and Environment; DOEE Rain Barrel Rebates
- D.C. Code §47-2711 waterfront permit requirement: D.C. Code
- DC Water structure: Wikipedia
- Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin: ICPRB

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## Washington, D.C.: Local Resources

### Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)

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HSEMA leads planning and coordination for the district's homeland security and emergency management: it operates D.C.'s Emergency Operations Center, the DC Fusion Center, the Business Emergency Management Operations Center, the AlertDC public alert system, and regional interoperable-communications coordination with Maryland and Virginia.

*Where to find it:* [hsema.dc.gov](https://hsema.dc.gov).

### CERT: run by Serve DC, in partnership with HSEMA

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D.C.'s Community Emergency Response Team program isn't run directly by HSEMA; it's administered by Serve DC, the Mayor's Office on Volunteerism and Partnerships, working in partnership with HSEMA. Training is free and open to anyone who lives, works, or regularly spends time in the district, and requires completing FEMA's IS-100 and IS-700 online courses, a D.C. background check, and a practical exam.

#### Two different agencies, one program

If you go looking for D.C.'s CERT program on HSEMA's own site and can't find a dedicated CERT page, that's why: sign-up and program administration run through Serve DC, not HSEMA directly, even though HSEMA is a genuine partner in it.

*Where to find it:* [servedc.galaxydigital.com/dc-cert](https://servedc.galaxydigital.com/dc-cert), or email [dc.cert@dc.gov](mailto:dc.cert@dc.gov).

### University of the District of Columbia: Master Gardener Program

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UDC, the district's land-grant university, runs a Master Gardener Program through its Center for Urban Agriculture, Gardening and Education, part of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES).

- **UDC Master Gardener Program:** 48 hours of basic training (a 16-week course, mostly weeknight sessions plus four Saturdays) plus 40 hours of required hands-on volunteer service, with a final exam requiring a 75% pass rate. Certified Master Gardeners maintain their status with 20 volunteer hours and 10 continuing-education hours a year. Open to any D.C. resident 18 or older; the \$300 course fee has financial assistance available, and applications are reviewed by ward to keep participation citywide across all 8 wards.

*Where to find it:* [udc.edu/causes/land-grant/center-for-urban-agriculture-gardening-education/master-gardener-program](http://udc.edu/causes/land-grant/center-for-urban-agriculture-gardening-education/master-gardener-program).

## Sources

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- HSEMA structure and functions: Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
- D.C. CERT program administration and requirements: Serve DC
- UDC Master Gardener Program structure and eligibility: University of the District of Columbia; DC Master Gardener

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# Washington, D.C.: 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 August 2011 Virginia earthquake

| Metric                                  | Figure                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date                                    | August 23, 2011                                               |
| Magnitude / epicenter                   | M5.8, near Mineral, VA, ~83 miles from D.C.                   |
| Washington Monument cracks              | 150+, some deep enough to let daylight through                |
| Washington Monument closure             | 32 months (Aug. 2011 - May 12, 2014)                          |
| Washington Monument repair cost         | \$15 million (\$7.5M federal funds, \$7.5M matching donation) |
| National Cathedral damage estimate      | ~\$34-38 million (sources vary; not covered by insurance)     |
| National Cathedral restoration timeline | Ongoing since 2011; full completion projected around 2029     |

### A damage bill that isn't finished almost 15 years later

The National Cathedral’s own restoration page still projects final completion around 2029, eighteen years after the quake. Three of the four central-tower corner spires were severely damaged, along with cracked flying buttresses and destroyed masonry, none of it covered by ordinary insurance, since earthquake damage isn’t a standard policy inclusion. A single quake most of the region felt as a strong jolt, not a catastrophe, still produced a repair timeline measured in decades.

# The June 2012 derecho

| Metric                       | Figure                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date                         | June 29, 2012 (evening)                                                                 |
| Peak wind gusts              | 87+ mph in the Baltimore-Washington corridor                                            |
| D.C. customers without power | ~68,000 (district-proper figure; regional total across DC-MD-VA exceeded 1 million)     |
| Restoration timeline         | 80-85% restored regionally by the following Tuesday; up to 8-10 days in worst-hit spots |
| Heat wave that followed      | Daily high at or above 95°F for over a week; peaked at 105°F on July 7, 2012            |
| Confirmed D.C. death         | 1 (electrocution while checking storm damage from a fallen tree)                        |
| Regional damage estimate     | ~\$2.9 billion (multi-state total, no separate D.C.-only figure available)              |

### Two different numbers for 'how many lost power,' and why

Sources describing this storm cite very different outage numbers because they’re describing different areas: roughly 68,000 customers in the District of Columbia itself, versus regional reporting of “more than a million” across the combined DC-Maryland-Virginia metro area. Both are accurate; they’re just answering a different question about scope. The district’s own retail customer base is small relative to its suburbs, so a D.C.-only figure will always look modest next to a metro-wide one.

## Sources

- 2011 Virginia earthquake epicenter and magnitude: USGS
- Washington Monument closure and repair cost: National Park Service; TIME
- Washington National Cathedral damage and restoration timeline: Washington National Cathedral; Washington Post
- June 2012 derecho wind speeds: NWS service assessment; Wikipedia
- D.C.-area outage figures, restoration timeline, and heat wave data: NOAA/NWS; Energy.gov