

BY STATE › WYOMING

Wyoming: Overview

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

The Yellowstone Caldera: an extremely low-probability, extremely high-consequence risk

Wyoming shares the Yellowstone region with Montana and Idaho, both already covered on this site through the 1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake and 1976 Teton Dam failure respectively, but Yellowstone's own supervolcano deserves its own treatment. The annual probability of another caldera-forming eruption is approximately 1 in 730,000, roughly comparable to the odds of a large asteroid striking Earth, and the USGS reports no current indication that a major eruption is approaching. If one ever did occur, the areas of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho closest to the caldera would face pyroclastic flows, while falling ash would affect a much wider area of the country. This isn't a risk to lose sleep over day to day, but it's a genuinely different category of hazard from anything else covered on this site: vanishingly unlikely, but catastrophic if it ever happened. See the Risks page for the full data.

The Blizzard of 1949: Wyoming's worst storm on record

Starting January 2, 1949, a blizzard with winds of 65-80 mph dumped 20-30 inches of snow on Cheyenne within days, the first of what became two months of repeated snow and bitter cold across the state. It killed 12 people in Wyoming and required a rescue effort involving at least 10 state and federal agencies, from the U.S. Army to the National Park Service. 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 Wyoming: extreme, sustained winter weather is a genuinely severe and historically proven risk here, not just an inconvenience, so this manual's extended-outage and vehicle-emergency-kit guidance matters as much as anywhere covered on this site, and while the Yellowstone Caldera isn't a near-term planning concern, it's worth

understanding why it's mentioned at all: even an essentially negligible-probability hazard is worth a paragraph when the consequences would be regional or national in scale.

Sources

- Yellowstone Caldera eruption probability and consequences: USGS; Popular Science
- Blizzard of 1949 data: WyoHistory.org; Cowboy State Daily

Wyoming: Laws & Legal Considerations

Rainwater harvesting: unregulated at small residential scale

Wyoming has no statute specifically addressing residential rainwater harvesting, but small-scale rooftop-to-barrel collection is widely practiced without a permit.

Rule	Wyoming
Source water	Rooftop or other catchment
Small-scale residential use	Widely practiced without a permit, though no specific statute explicitly authorizes it
Larger systems	May require a formal water appropriation permit through the State Engineer's Office if downstream water rights could be affected

Where to find it: the Wyoming State Engineer’s Office administers water appropriation permits.

Water rights: the first state to constitutionalize prior appropriation

Wyoming didn’t just adopt prior appropriation, it was the first state to write the doctrine directly into its constitution, at statehood in 1890.

Concept	How it works in Wyoming
Basic rule	'First in time is first in right': the earliest-dated beneficial use holds priority during a shortage
Constitutional basis	Wyoming Constitution, Article 8, which declares the water of all natural streams, springs, lakes, and other still-water collections to be state property
Historical significance	Wyoming's 1890 constitutionalization of prior appropriation predates and influenced how several other Western states, including some covered elsewhere on this site, later structured their own water law

Where to find it: the Wyoming State Engineer’s Office administers appropriation and adjudication.

Concealed carry: permitless at 21+, with a new 2026 permit option for 18-20 year-olds

Wyoming’s constitutional (permitless) carry standard remains set at 21, but a 2026 law opened a new path for younger adults.

Standard	Detail
Permitless carry	21+ only, for anyone legally eligible to possess a firearm
18-20 year-olds	As of HB 96, effective July 1, 2026, may now apply for and hold a physical concealed carry permit, a path that didn't exist for this age group before

A new option, not a lowered permitless age

Wyoming’s 2026 change doesn’t lower the permitless-carry age itself, it opens the previously 21+-only optional permit to 18-20 year-olds for the first time. That’s a narrower change than several other states’ recent age adjustments covered on this site (Idaho and West Virginia both lowered their actual permitless threshold), worth distinguishing carefully since the practical effect is different.

Sources

- Wyoming rainwater harvesting practice: LegalClarity
- Wyoming’s constitutional prior appropriation doctrine (1890): Wyoming Water Development Commission; Wyoming Legal Authority
- Wyoming’s 2026 concealed carry permit age change (HB 96): Wyoming News

Wyoming: Local Resources

Wyoming Office of Homeland Security (WOHS)

WOHS provides programs for statewide emergency response, search and rescue, and hazard mitigation across Wyoming.

Where to find it: hls.wyo.gov.

University of Wyoming Extension: Master Gardener Program

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

- **University of Wyoming Master Gardener Program:** a minimum of 40 hours of science-based horticulture training, connecting participants across the state with volunteer service opportunities suited to Wyoming's specific growing environment.

Where to find it: uwyo.edu/mastergardener.

CERT: county-run, with Teton County's program among the most established

Wyoming's CERT programs run through individual county emergency management offices, including established teams in Laramie, Teton, Albany, and Uinta counties. Teton County's program, home to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, has trained volunteers since 2006 through a free 32-hour course.

A long-running program in a high-visibility location

Teton County's CERT program has operated since 2006, longer than many county-level programs covered on other states' pages, likely reflecting the county's high visitor traffic and proximity to Yellowstone's unique hazard profile discussed on this state's overview page.

Where to find it: tetoncountywy.gov, or your own county's emergency management office.

Sources

- Wyoming Office of Homeland Security programs: NRD.gov
- University of Wyoming Master Gardener Program requirements: University of Wyoming
- Teton County CERT program history: Teton County, WY

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Wyoming: 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 Yellowstone Caldera

Metric	Figure
Annual probability of a caldera-forming eruption	~1 in 730,000 (~0.00014%)
Comparable risk	Roughly similar to the odds of a large (1 km) asteroid striking Earth
Current magma chamber state	5-15% molten material, not a solid pool of ready-to-erupt lava
Current USGS assessment	No indication that a major eruption is approaching
Regional impact if it occurred	Pyroclastic flows affecting the nearest parts of WY, MT, and ID; falling ash affecting a much broader area of the country

Why this is worth a page at all, given the odds

A 1-in-730,000 annual probability is genuinely negligible for day-to-day planning purposes, and nothing here should be read as suggesting otherwise. It’s included because the site’s standard is to name every hazard with real regional-to-national consequence potential, however unlikely, and to give readers the actual numbers rather than either alarmist framing or silence.

The Blizzard of 1949

Metric	Figure
Start date	January 2, 1949
Peak winds	65-80 mph
Cheyenne snowfall, initial surge	20-30 in within days
Total event duration	~2 months of repeated snow and bitter cold following the initial storm
Deaths	12 (Wyoming)
Rescue effort	10+ state and federal agencies involved, including the U.S. Army and National Park Service
Historical ranking	Widely considered the worst winter storm in Wyoming's recorded history

A storm, then a season, not a single event

The Blizzard of 1949’s initial multi-day storm was followed by roughly two more months of repeated snow and extreme cold across Wyoming. Its reputation as the state’s worst storm reflects that extended pattern, not just the opening blizzard’s snowfall total.

Sources

- Yellowstone Caldera eruption probability and consequences: USGS; Popular Science
- Blizzard of 1949 data: WyoHistory.org; Cowboy State Daily