

MARCH 2001: The first month of meteorological Spring began much the same way the 2000-2001 Winter did, with a persistent pattern of colder than normal weather across the Washington/Baltimore area. In fact, it was the coldest March in five years at the three major airports with monthly temperature departures between -2°F and -4°F. There were 25 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA, including 11 days with lows at or below freezing (the most such March days since 1993). The last week of the month produced daily temperature departures between -2°F and -17°F at DCA and lows in the teens across many suburban locations on the 27th, including a 17°F reading at IAD. There were only 4 days when highs topped 60°F at DCA and no days with highs at or above 70°F (the first such occurrence in March since 1993). Highs more typical of January (upper 30's and low 40's) were observed on the 5th, 6th, 26th and 27th across the local area.

Above normal precipitation was recorded at all five airports for the first month since September 2000. Monthly precipitation totals ranged from about four inches at DCA & IAD to almost five inches at BWI, DAA & ADW. The majority of the months precipitation fell from two major storm systems. On the 20th-21st, a strong coastal storm soaked the area, generating over an inch of rain at most locations and nearly two inches at BWI (1.81"). The storm was accompanied by gale force wind gusts (up to 50 mph) in some areas. The abundant moisture combined with high winds, downed trees and power lines and cut off power to some areas. About a week later (29th-30th), another intense storm brought copious amounts of rain to the region with two-day precipitation totals between 1.5" to 2.0" recorded at many locations. Severe weather was minimal during the month, although isolated thunderstorms dropped hail in Laurel, MD on the 13th. Later that same evening, the passage of a cold front was accompanied by brief, but very strong wind gusts that reached 70 mph in Prince William County, Virginia. March is the windiest month of the year across the local area (average wind speed 11.1 mph at DCA) and this year was no exception. On the 13th, both DCA and BWI recorded a peak wind gust of 48 mph and IAD recorded wind gusts up to 51 mph. Despite the chilly conditions, snowfall was sparse with monthly totals of an inch or less recorded at the three major airports. On the 4th-5th, a storm system that brought about 0.5" of precipitation ended as wet snow, but accumulations were very light across the Washington/Baltimore area.

MARCH 2001 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	52.3	35.2	43.7	47.2	-3.5	66/11*	25/6#	3.88	3.17	+0.71	0.2
Baltimore (BWI)	51.3	32.2	41.7	44.1	-2.4	64/24	20/27	4.76	3.38	+1.38	T
Dulles (IAD)	51.1	30.1	40.6	43.2	-2.6	64/11@	17/27	4.14	3.17	+0.97	1.0
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	53.2	32.2	42.7	N/A	N/A	68/11@	21/27^	5.05	3.7	+1.4	1.2
Andrews AFB (ADW)	49.1	29.7	39.4	N/A	N/A	66/13	19/28	4.76	3.6	+1.2	T

Other Occurrences: * March 24th; # March 27th; @ March 13th; ^ March 28th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO APRIL: *The last freeze of spring?*

April is usually the last month when a 32°F or lower reading occurs in Washington until the following autumn. In fact, a freezing reading has never occurred in Washington in May, but that has not always been the case just outside of the city. Below is a list of the last date of a 32°F or lower reading at DCA and IAD for the last ten years. As one can see, this date can vary widely between the city and suburban locations.

DCA				IAD			
Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading
2000	March 19 (32°F)	1995	April 5 (30°F)	2000	April 14 (32°F)	1995	April 15 (29°F)
1999	March 23 (32°F)	1994	March 18 (31°F)	1999	April 25 (31°F)	1994	April 8 (29°F)
1998	March 25 (31°F)	1993	March 20 (29°F)	1998	April 13 (32°F)	1993	April 28 (32°F)
1997	April 10 (28°F)	1992	April 4 (31°F)	1997	May 8 (31°F)	1992	April 6 (30°F)
1996	March 23 (32°F)	1991	March 31 (31°F)	1996	May 14 (32°F)	1991	April 3 (23°F)

Latest 32°F or lower reading ever recorded in Washington: April 29 (1874)

Latest 32°F or lower reading ever recorded at IAD: May 17 (1984)