

APRIL 2002: The month was highlighted by a devastating bout of severe weather toward the end of the month and also the first wetter than normal month since last summer. One of the strongest tornadoes (F4 -207-260 mph winds) ever observed in the local area left a path of destruction across parts of southern Maryland on the 28th. Damage was so severe in parts of Charles, Calvert and Dorchester counties that they were declared federal disaster areas. According to the National Weather Service Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office in Sterling, VA, the twister touched down between Risen and Marbury, in Charles County. The tornado strengthened to an F4 (207-260 mph winds) level as it moved through parts of La Plata. The tornado eventually weakened as it moved into Calvert County. The twister reportedly traveled 24 miles in Charles County and at least 6 miles into Calvert County and had a width of about 400 yards. To the east, a tornado also touched down on the Eastern Shore (Dorchester County), causing extensive damage. According to press reports, the twister claimed five lives, injured more than 100 people and caused over \$100 million in damage. In Charles County, 6 homes were completely swept off their foundation. This was the second F3 (158-206 mph winds) or higher tornado in less than a year in Maryland. Last September, an F3 twister touched down in College Park, causing extensive damage. To the west, severe thunderstorms also battered Fauquier and Warren counties in Virginia on the 28th, generating heavy rain, golf ball size hail and funnel clouds. Rainfall from these storms combined with frequent precipitation throughout April produced the first wetter than normal month since July 2001 at DCA (since August 2001 at both BWI and IAD). Monthly precipitation totals between 3.50" and 4.00" were common at many locations. The rains were beneficial for short-term moisture, but did not alleviate long-term drought conditions across much of the local area. Daily record rainfall was observed at some locations on the 28th, including both IAD (1.68") and BWI (1.43" BWI). On the 19th, strong thunderstorms moved through Washington D.C. and Arlington County, VA., generating 70 mph wind gusts & dime size hail, toppling trees and downing power lines. According to press reports, there was one fatality when a tree fell on a van in northeast Washington, D.C. Additional significant rains included 1.23" at BWI on the 18th and about 0.50" at both BWI & IAD on the 9th.

Monthly temperatures averaged more than 3°F above normal across the Washington/Baltimore area. In fact, it was the warmest April at the three major airports since 1994. The warmer than normal conditions during April were largely the result of a four-day heat wave, as daily readings soared to summerlike levels from the 16th-19th across the local region. Daily record highs were established on the 16th & 17th at both DCA (92°F & 95°F) & BWI (90°F & 93°F) and on the 16th, 17th and 19th at IAD (91°F, 93°F & 91°F). The high of 95°F on the 17th at DCA tied the all-time highest reading ever observed in April and was also the earliest 95°F+ reading ever recorded. There were 17 days with above normal temperatures, including the 14th, 15th, and 20th as highs routinely soared into the eighties. In sharp contrast, readings more typical of February were observed on the 6th (highs in the forties) and were accompanied by windy conditions. On the 7th, lows dipped below freezing across most of the local area, including IAD where the mercury plunged to 22°F. It was the 6th consecutive warmer than normal month and the 5th out of the last six with monthly temperature departures exceeding +3°F at the three major airports.

APRIL 2002 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	Yr-to-date
National (DCA)	70.3	49.6	60.0	56.1	+3.9	95/17	32/7	3.47	2.77	+0.70	8.63
Baltimore (BWI)	68.1	45.3	56.7	53.2	+3.5	93/17	26/7	4.08	3.00	+1.08	10.28
Dulles (IAD)	69.5	44.1	56.8	53.1	+3.7	93/17	22/7	3.45	3.22	+0.23	8.62
Andrews AFB (ADW)	69.5	45.9	57.7	N/A	N/A	93/17	23/7	2.75	3.0	-0.2	9.22

LOOKING AHEAD TO MAY: *A seventh consecutive warmer than normal month?*

As mentioned earlier, the Washington/Baltimore area experienced a sixth consecutive warmer than normal month. The questions arises whether above-normal temperatures will prevail across the local area for a seventh consecutive month? Below is a list of the average temperatures for the last six months at DCA along with the corresponding monthly temperature departure.

Month & Year	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Dep. Nml. (°F)	Month & Year	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Dep. Nml. (°F)
April 2002	60.0	+3.9	January 2002	41.6	+6.7
March 2002	47.6	+1.1	December 2001	45.5	+6.0
February 2002	42.6	+4.5	November 2001	54.8	+6.1

