

MAY 2003: A persistent pattern of cloudy, wet, and cool conditions prevailed in May across the Washington/Baltimore area. Monthly temperatures were down between -2.6F and -3.9F at the three major airports, marking the coolest May in Washington since 1967 (see cover). DCA recorded 24 days with at or below normal temperatures; the last 19 days were all below normal (13th-31st). May offered 27 cloudy days and no days with full sunshine, contributing to the subnormal temperatures. DCA recorded only 4 days with 80°F+ highs and no days with 90°F+ readings. In fact at DCA, highs averaged more than 7°F below normal.

Rainfall was frequent and heavy at times with all three major airports recording monthly precipitation totals between 7 and 9 inches, more than double the monthly average. May 2003 was the wettest since 1989 at DCA and the wettest month since September 1999 when Tropical Storms Dennis and Floyd impacted the area. A few locations recorded more than 10 inches of rain in May. Measurable rainfall (≥ 0.01 ") occurred on 20 days at DCA, equaling July 1904 as the most such days recorded in any month in Washington. Three storm systems contributed to the excessive precipitation totals and occasional localized flooding. On the 15th-16th, IAD observed 2.67", BWI 1.96", and DCA 1.72". Five days later, many areas received over an inch of rain: BWI (1.10"), IAD (1.06"). Memorial Day (26th) featured the month's third soaking rain with the region receiving more than an inch of water: 1.51" at BWI and a record daily amount of 1.49" at DCA. The cool conditions limited severe weather to just two days, the 7th and 31st. Cold fronts on both days resulted in strong thunderstorms in the afternoon. Funnel clouds were observed in some areas in Northern Virginia on the 7th, but no tornadoes were reported. Meanwhile, strong wind gusts accompanied thunderstorms on the 31st, including a peak wind of 60 mph at ADW. The month will also be remembered for the dense fog that developed in Western Maryland on the 23rd, reportedly resulting in an 80-vehicle accident on I-68, causing two deaths and 90 injuries.

MAY 2003 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Yr to Date
National (DCA)	68.3	55.1	61.7	65.6	-3.9	82/11	45/19	7.06	3.82	+3.24	21.67
Baltimore (BWI)	67.1	51.5	59.3	62.9	-3.6	83/11	39/19	6.81	3.89	+2.92	22.67
Dulles (IAD)	67.8	51.7	59.7	62.3	-2.6	82/11	41/5*	8.74	4.22	+4.52	22.98
Andrews AFB (ADW)	67.7	52.4	60.1	N/A	N/A	84/11	43/19#	7.59	4.0	+3.6	26.76

Other Occurrences: * May 14th; # May 20th.

SPRING (MARCH-MAY) 2003: Spring was highlighted by subnormal temperatures and above normal precipitation. The region experienced seasonal temperatures departures between -0.6F and -1.5F. DCA logged 56 (61%) days with at or below normal temperatures, including only 8 days with highs at or above 80°F and no days with 90°F+ readings. In March, after an abnormally snowy, cold winter, weather conditions more typical of early spring prevailed across the Washington/Baltimore area. The three major airports recorded slightly above normal temperatures of about +0.5°F. Near-normal temperatures prevailed in April at most locations with the three area airport recording monthly temperatures between -1°F and +0.5°F. April featured several brief warm periods followed by much cooler weather. Highs topped 80°F across much of the area on the 2nd & 3rd, including a high of 83°F on the 3rd at DCA. On the 15th & 16th, highs again soared into the 80s with all three major airports recording a high of 85°F on the 16th (readings about 20°F above normal). Just a few days after each warm spell, highs failed to reach 40°F at most locations. The final freeze of the season occurred on the 1st at most locations although a few areas recorded freezing temperatures on the 24th, including BWI (32°F). May featured abnormally cool weather, the coldest in more than 35 years in Washington with 24 days at or below normal temperatures and peak temperatures for the month in the low 80s.

Seasonal precipitation totals were well above-normal across the Washington/Baltimore area. The three major airports logged 3-month precipitation surpluses between 2.50" and 4.50". DCA recorded 47 days with measurable precipitation this spring. IAD recorded 15.16", it's second wettest spring, while BWI observed its eighth wettest with 13.38". The season started with above-normal precipitation in March. Monthly precipitation totals of about 4 inches were common across the area. Wintry weather prevailed on the 30th as a chilly rain developed then changed over to wet snow during the morning. Ground surfaces were warm, and along with daytime heating, prevented significant accumulations of snow. Still, the snow came down hard at times, depositing 1.8" at IAD and 2.6" at BWI. Elevated areas of western Montgomery County measured more than 4 inches of snow. More than a foot of snow accumulated in the West Virginia mountains near Canaan Valley ski area. April brought slightly below-normal precipitation, marking only the second month since September 2002 with below-normal precipitation at the three major airports. In May, a persistent rainy pattern dominated most of the month (some rain fell nearly every day), yielding above-normal precipitation across the Washington/Baltimore area. There were only 6 days with no rain reported at DCA.

SPRING 2003 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Month-Day		Precipitation (In)		
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml
National (DCA)	62.8	43.3	54.6	56.1	-1.5	85/4-16	20/3-3	13.81	10.19	+3.62
Baltimore (BWI)	62.7	42.7	52.0	53.3	-1.3	85/4-16	17/3-3*	13.38	10.82	+2.56
Dulles (IAD)	63.0	42.9	52.4	53.0	-0.6	85/4-16	14/3-3*	15.16	10.99	+4.17
Andrews AFB (ADW)	63.1	43.7	53.4	N/A	N/A	86/4-16	19/3-3	14.09	10.6	+3.5

Other occurrences: * March 4th;

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER: Some noteworthy seasonal statistics.

With Spring behind us, we now look ahead to the meteorological Summer (June-August). Below is a list of some of the summer extremes that have occurred in Washington since records began in 1871.

Temperature Extremes

Coldest: 1907 (Avg. Temp: 71.4°F; Dep. Nml.: -6.7°F)
Warmest: 1980 (Avg. Temp: 80.0°F; Dep. Nml.: +1.9°F)
Extreme Minimum Temperature: 43°F (Jun. 2, 1897)
Extreme Maximum Temperature: 106°F (Jul. 20, 1930 & Aug. 6, 1917)
Most days with: highs ≥ 90 °F: 67 (1980)

Precipitation Extremes

Wettest: 1906 (Tot. Prec.: 27.05 ; Dep. Nml.: +15.96)
Driest: 1962 & 1966 (Tot. Prec.: 4.62; Dep. Nml.: -6.47)
Most precipitation in one day (liquid): 6.39" (Aug. 23, 1933)