

FEBRUARY 2004: Near normal temperatures with subnormal precipitation highlighted weather conditions across the Washington/Baltimore area. Temperatures averaged exactly normal at DCA and IAD and slightly below normal at BWI. There were only 13 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA. Further, there was no bitter cold Arctic air during the month. Neither DCA nor BWI recorded any days with at or below freezing highs while IAD observed only two such days (1st & 16th). The lowest readings for the month were the first two days when minimum temperatures fell into the single digits, aided by snow cover remaining from the January 25th storm. After that, minimum temperatures generally were above 20°F at most locations. DCA recorded its first minimum temperature above freezing (since January 6th; 35 consecutive days) on the 10th; most other locations finally recorded an above freezing low by the 21st. Milder air and daytime highs above 50°F were recorded on the 10th, 19-21st, and 28th-29th. In fact, temperatures soared into the 60s at some locations on the 19th, 20th and as high as 67°F at IAD on Leap Day (29th).

Precipitation was below normal for the second consecutive month across the area as monthly totals averaged between 2.0" and 2.5". Most of the monthly precipitation occurred in the first week when morning rains brought between 0.50" and 0.75" on the 3rd. A second storm on the 5th-6th soaked the region with over 1.5" inches: 1.62", IAD; 1.60", DCA. The precipitation began as sleet during the evening of the 5th then changed to freezing rain overnight and eventually rain by morning when temperatures rose above the freezing mark. Some locations north and west of Washington/Baltimore measured up to 1/4" of ice on exposed surfaces, downing power lines and causing some power outages according to press reports. In addition, some street and small stream flooding occurred from the heavy precipitation although no extensive flooding was reported. Generally dry conditions prevailed for the remainder of the month with only light rain (less than .10" in most areas) reported on the 24th. No precipitation was reported from the 7th-23rd at DCA, the longest such period since December 6-23, 2002. In sharp contrast to 2003, only a trace of frozen precipitation occurred during the month at DCA and IAD (0.1" at BWI), the lowest February total since 1998.

FEBRUARY 2004 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
Location	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	45.9	29.6	37.7	38.1	0.4	60/19	15/1	2.28	2.63	-.35	Trace
Baltimore (BWI)	43.6	25.2	34.4	35.5	1.1	59/28	8/1	2.40	3.02	-.62	0.1
Dulles (IAD)	44.1	24.8	34.4	34.8	0.4	62/20	5/2	1.93	2.77	-.84	Trace
Andrews AFB (ADW)	46.0	27.0	36.5	N/A	N/A	66/29	14/2	2.82	3.30	-.48	0.0

WINTER (DECEMBER-FEBRUARY) 2003-2004: Below-normal temperatures, precipitation and snowfall prevailed across the Washington/Baltimore area. Seasonal temperature departures between -1.5°F and -2°F were observed at the three major airports. There were 63 days (69%) with at or below freezing lows, including 35 consecutive days (January 6-February 9) at DCA. DCA, BWI and IAD reported seasonal precipitation totals around 8" for about a 1" seasonal deficit.

In December, there were 19 days with lows at or below freezing at DCA. Temperatures averaged more than 3°F below normal during the first 3 weeks of December, but during the final 7-10 days much milder air enveloped the region generating temperatures averaging more than 7°F above normal. The new year began with unusually warm conditions in the first 5 days. Highs on the 3rd and 4th topped 60°F at most locations, including a high at DCA of 72°F on the 4th (73°F at IAD). The high of 68°F on January 3rd tied a daily record at DCA. A dramatic drop in temperature occurred after January 5th, yielding 23 out of 26 days with subnormal temperatures, 15 days with highs and 26 consecutive days with lows at or below freezing. On the 10th, the mercury plunged into the single digits across the Washington/Baltimore area, including a low of 8°F at DCA (the lowest such reading since February 5, 1996). January temperature departures were between -3°F and -5°F at most locations, the coldest such month in 10 years at the three major airports. Somewhat milder conditions prevailed during February with most locations recording at or slightly below normal temperatures. There were 13 days with at or below normal temperatures and 20 days with at or below freezing lows. In addition, there were no days with subfreezing highs unlike a month earlier. A brief mild spell occurred from the 19th-21st and again on the 28th and 29th as most locations observed readings in the upper 50s and low 60s.

The season began with above normal December precipitation. In fact, the three major airports recorded more precipitation in December than in January and February combined. The area observed seasonal snowfall totals around 1 foot with 3-month totals around 18" reported at locations north and west of Washington. Most locations recorded more than 4 inches of liquid precipitation and more than half a foot of snow. In fact, December marked the 8th consecutive month with above-normal precipitation at the three major airports. On December 4th and 5th, up to 9" of snow fell on some locations west and north of Washington (slightly less than an inch of snow at DCA). The precipitation eventually turned to rain at most locations and ended as snow on the 6th, leaving nearly 2" of snow on the ground at DCA and 3.8" at BWI. On December 17th, another storm system generated 3.6" of snow at both DCA and IAD and 2.8" at BWI. Drier weather occurred in January with monthly precipitation totals of less than 1.5" reported at most locations. Overall, it was the driest month since February 2002. Despite the drier than normal conditions, all three major airports reported more than 6" of snow, most of which fell from the 25th-27th. February was also drier than normal, with monthly precipitation totals between 1.5" and 2.5" reported at the three major airports. DCA and IAD reported only a trace of snow and BWI, just 0.1". January and February 2004 were the first back-to-back drier than normal months since August-September 2002.

WINTER 2003-2004 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Month-Day		Precipitation (In)			
Location	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	43.3	28.2	35.7	37.5	1.8	72/1-4	8/1-10	7.95	8.89	-0.94	12.4
Baltimore (BWI)	41.3	24.2	32.7	34.8	2.1	63/1-4	6/1-10	8.37	9.84	-1.47	18.1
Dulles (IAD)	41.8	23.8	32.8	34.1	1.3	73/1-4	6/1-11	7.91	8.89	-0.98	17.4
Andrews AFB (ADW)	42.1	25.2	33.6	N/A	N/A	73/1-4	1/1-29	8.87	9.30	-0.43	10.3

LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH: The transitional month.

With the end of another winter, thoughts now turn to spring. March can be a month of extremes. Below is a list of some notable March climatological statistics for Washington since records began in 1871 (snowfall records began in 1888).

Temperature Extremes			Precipitation Extremes		
Coldest: 1885	Avg. Temp.: 34.5°F	Dep. Nml.: -12.0°F	Wettest: 1891	Tot. Prec.: 8.84"	Dep. Nml.: +5.24"
Warmest: 1921 & 1945	Avg. Temp.: 55.5°F	Dep. Nml.: +9.0°F	Driest: 1910	Tot. Prec.: 0.57"	Dep. Nml.: -3.03"
Extreme Minimum: 4°F (March 4, 1873)			Snowiest: 1914	Tot. Snowfall: 19.3"	Dep. Nml.: +17.7"
Extreme Maximum: 93°F (March 23, 1907)			Most precipitation in one day (liquid): 2.79" (March 9, 1881)		
Most days with: lows ≤ 32°F: 24 (1960) ; highs ≥ 90°F: 3 (1907)			Most snowfall in one day: 11.3" (March 29, 1942)		