

MAY 2004: Unusually warm temperatures highlighted weather conditions across the Washington/Baltimore area. There were 24 days with at or above normal readings at DCA, including 20 days with highs at or above 80°F at both DCA and IAD and 19 at BWI. DCA observed a monthly temperature departure of +6.2°F; BWI, +6.9°F; IAD, +7.5°F, resulting in the second warmest May ever recorded in Washington and at BWI (see graphic) and the warmest May on record at IAD. In addition, most of the area reported 90°F+ highs, including all three major airports, on the 23rd and at both DCA and BWI on the 24th. Many nights were also exceptionally warm. DCA recorded 22 days with 60°F+ lows (20 at BWI and 19 at IAD). Lows remained at or above 70°F on three days at DCA (1 day at both BWI and IAD). In fact, the lows on the 23rd and 24th at DCA (74°F and 72°F) both exceeded the highest "normal" minimum temperatures (typically observed in mid-July) for the airport. The coolest weather of the month occurred on the 3rd as clouds and rain kept highs in the 50s across the local area. Lows above 50°F were observed on all but three days (3rd-6th) at DCA. In addition, the mercury dipped to 41°F on the 4th and 5th at IAD. May 2004 will go down in the record books as being warmer than June 2003 at both DCA and IAD.

Rainfall was highly variable across the area with monthly precipitation totaling less than 3" at some locations while other locations recorded more than 6" of rain. This variation was the result of numerous thunderstorms yielding widely divergent rainfall amounts. BWI observed 5.06" of rain (Dep. Normal: +1.17") while DCA recorded only 2.98" (Dep. Normal: -0.84"). Measurable rain (≥0.01") was recorded on 18 days at DCA, with thunderstorms reported on 13 days, more than double the normal 5 days. The largest outbreak of severe weather struck on the 25th when at least three tornadoes touched down in the local area. An F-1 tornado (winds between 73 -112 mph) struck Leitersburg, MD, (just north of Hagerstown) around 5:30 P.M., destroying a building under construction, according to press reports. Two F-0 tornadoes (winds between 40-72 mph) were also reported. The first one touched down in northwest Frederick County, MD, (near Camp David) and the other near Lovettsville, VA (Loudoun County). Many areas were also impacted by the storms as tens of thousands lost power and some areas were pelted by hail (1.25" hail stones in Alexandria) and hail nearly an inch in diameter at Clinton, MD, according to press reports. The most significant rainfall of the month accompanied these storms at some locations, including BWI, where nearly an inch of rain was recorded (0.93"). Earlier in the month on the 7th, thunderstorms produced hail as large as 1.5" across portions of the southern D.C. suburbs. Nearly two dozen homes suffered damage, including five that suffered major damage in Stafford County, VA, according to press reports. Three days later, the southern suburbs were again the focus of severe thunderstorms, as winds gusted to 60 mph, toppling trees and cutting power to thousands of homes.

MAY 2004 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)				Extreme/Day			Precipitation (In.)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	Dep Nml	Yr to Date
National (DCA)	80.6	62.9	71.8	65.6	+6.2	92/23	44/4	2.98	3.82	-0.84	12.54
Baltimore BWI)	79.6	59.9	69.8	62.9	+6.9	91/23	41/4	5.05	3.89	+1.16	16.77
Dulles (IAD)	80.2	59.3	69.8	62.3	+7.5	90/23	41/4*	3.06	4.22	-1.16	14.98
Andrews (ADW)	82.0	61.0	71.5	N/A	N/A	93/10	45/6	3.97	4.00	-0.03	15.89

*Additional occurrences: May 5

SPRING (MARCH-MAY) 2004: Much of the Washington/Baltimore area experienced abnormal warmth and near-normal precipitation. In fact it was one of the warmest springs on record. IAD observed its second warmest spring on record and Washington and BWI recorded their third warmest springs, tied with 1945 at DCA. Seasonal temperature departures were between +3°F and +4°F at the three major airports. Spring rainfall was near-normal with 3-month totals of 9"-10" common at many locations. BWI recorded slightly above-normal seasonal precipitation (13.12") with a 3-month surplus of just over 2" while both DCA and IAD reported seasonal deficits around 1". The season commenced with a warmer than normal March. Monthly temperature departures between +1.9°F and +2.9°F were observed at the major airports. Temperatures averaged between 8°F and 20°F above normal from the 1st-7th at DCA. Many locations recorded highs in the 70s from March 25th-27th, including a high of 78°F at IAD on the 26th. April brought more above-normal temperatures with monthly departures between +1°F and +2°F at all three major airports. The month was split with subnormal temperatures dominating in the first half of the month but abnormal warmth during the latter half. From the 1st-16th, temperatures averaged nearly 4°F below normal at DCA. During the last two weeks of April, temperatures were more than 7°F above normal at DCA. On the 19th, all three major airports logged their first 90°F+ reading of the year. Unusually warm weather prevailed across the local area in May with monthly temperature departures between +6°F and +8°F at the three major airports.

March began spring with drier than normal conditions across the Washington/Baltimore area despite many days (13 at DCA) with measurable precipitation (≥0.01"). Monthly precipitation totals between 2" and 3" were common across the local area. It was the driest March at DCA since 1987. Wetter-than-normal weather prevailed in April. In fact April was the first month of 2004 with above-normal precipitation at the three major airports and the wettest April since 2000 for many areas. Monthly precipitation surpluses between 1" and 2.50" were observed at DCA, BWI and IAD. Slightly below-normal precipitation was observed at many locations during May, including both DCA and IAD. Monthly precipitation totals around 3" were observed at both DCA and IAD but topped 5" at BWI.

SPRING 2004 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)				Extreme/Day			Precipitation (In.)		
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	Dep Nml
National (DCA)	68.3	50.2	59.3	56.1	+3.2	92/5-23	26/3-23	9.75	10.19	-0.44
Baltimore (BWI)	66.7	46.6	56.7	53.3	+3.4	91/5-23	21/3-23	13.11	10.82	+2.29
Dulles (IAD)	67.7	46.2	57.0	53.0	+5.0	90/5-23	19/3-23	10.16	10.99	-0.83
Andrews (ADW)	69.0	48.7	58.5	N/A	N/A	93/5-10	21/3-23	11.25	10.60	+0.65

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER: 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.: -5.6°F)
Warmest: 1980 (Avg. Temp: 80.0°F; Dep. Nml.: +3.0°F)
Extreme Minimum Temp.: 43°F (Jun. 2, 1897)
Extreme Maximum Temp.: 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.: +16.82)
Driest: 1962 & 1966 (Tot. Prec.: 4.62; Dep. Nml.: -5.61)
Most precipitation in one day (liquid): 6.39" (Aug. 23, 1933)