

March 2006

March Precipitation: In sharp contrast to March 2005, the first month of meteorological spring featured record dryness across the Washington/Baltimore area. Precipitation totals were less than 0.25" across the region, resulting in the driest March ever recorded at all three major airports. This compared to 4.46" at DCA in March 2005. DCA's monthly precipitation total of 0.05" and BWI's total of 0.18" were their lowest monthly totals since October 2000, while IAD's total of 0.07" equalled October 2000 as its 2nd lowest amount ever recorded. March was the 4th driest month ever recorded in Washington and at BWI. The month was the 3rd driest month on record at IAD (see cover). Measurable precipitation (≥ 0.01 ") occurred on only 3 days at DCA, 2 days at BWI, and 4 days at IAD. In addition, DCA observed no measurable rainfall from the 3rd through the 20th, while BWI measured no more than a trace of precipitation from the 15th-31st. Precipitation deficits for the month were well over 3 inches across much of the local area (DCA -3.55"; BWI (-3.75"); IAD (-3.48").

Fire danger increased substantially during the month as topsoil layers continued to dry and many days featured gusty winds. On March 16, a three-alarm blaze destroyed two landmark restaurants on Solomon's Island, MD, according to press reports. Several hundred brush fires ignited in Maryland and Virginia as a result of dry conditions since mid-February, according to press reports. In addition, by month's end moderate drought conditions developed across the metropolitan areas and points eastward with January through March percent of normal precipitation only at about 61 percent of normal at DCA, 60 percent at BWI, and 52 percent at IAD.

March Temperatures were slightly above normal at all three airports with monthly temperature departures between +1°F and +2.5°F at the three major airports. March 2006 marked the 14th month in the last 17 with above normal monthly readings at DCA. While the majority the days featured temperatures at or below normal, there two periods with well above normal temperatures that contributed to the warmer than normal monthly readings. From the 9th -14th, daily temperatures averaged 17°F above normal at DCA. The month's extreme maximum temperature was observed on the 14th throughout the area with summer like highs observed at the major airports: DCA, 85°F, BWI, 84°F; and IAD, 85°F. Temperatures soared into the 70's from the 10th-12th and again on the 14th at most locations. On the 10th, IAD observed a record daily high (78°F) while both DCA (78°F) and BWI (77°F) tied record daily highs. After a return to cooler weather, the month ended on a warm note with above normal readings from the 28th through month's end, including readings on the 31st of 78°F at both DCA and BWI and 79°F at IAD, temperatures more typical of mid to late May.

The coldest day of the month occurred on the 21st when the mercury held in the 30's at most locations. Maximum readings for the 21st (41°F at DCA and 40°F at BWI) were observed shortly after midnight. While minimum readings remained above 20°F throughout the area during the month, freezing temperatures occurred frequently, especially outside Washington and Baltimore. BWI and IAD observed 14 days with lows at or below 32°F while DCA noted 10 such days.

MARCH 2006 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA

Location	Station Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Total	Precipitation (In.)		
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	Max	MinT		Norm	DepNml	Yr. to Date
National (DCA)	57.4	38.3	47.9	46.5	+1.4	85/13	28/19	0.05	3.60	-3.55	5.76
Baltimore (BWI)	56.8	34.4	45.6	43.7	+1.9	84/13	24/8	0.18	3.93	-3.75	6.30
Dulles (IAD)	57.3	34.4	45.8	43.4	+2.4	85/13	23/8	0.07	3.55	-3.48	4.85
Andrews (ADW)	56.0	36.0	46.0	N/A	N/A	84/13	10/4	0.07	3.60	-3.53	3.99

Looking Ahead to April: Last Freeze at DCA and IAD. April is usually the last month before fall when a 32°F or lower reading occurs in Washington. The city has never recorded a freezing reading in May, although suburban areas have. Below is a list of the last 32°F or lower reading at urban DCA and suburban IAD for the last 10 years.

At DCA				At 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
2005	March 18 (31°F)	2000	March 19 (32°F)	2005	April 17 (31°F)	2000	April 14 (32°F)
2004	April 5 (31°F)	1999	March 23 (32°F)	2004	April 16 (30°F)	1999	April 25 (31°F)
2003	April 1 (32°F)	1998	March 25 (31°F)	2003	April 1 (27°F)	1998	April 13 (32°F)
2002	April 7 (32°F)	1997	April 10 (28°F)	2002	April 1 (27°F)	1997	May 8 (31°F)
2001	March 28 (28°F)	1996	March 23 (32°F)	2001	April 26 (32°F)	1996	May 14 (32°F)