

The Blizzard of 1993: March was highlighted by "The Storm of the Century" which battered the eastern third of the U.S. around mid-month. The storm generated blizzard conditions from the deep South to the Northeast, and severe weather across the eastern Gulf Coast states. Record snowfalls were established from Alabama to northern New England while intense thunderstorms spawned dozens of tornadoes and wind gusts over 100 mph in Florida, and coastal flooding along portions of the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts. The intensity of the storm was reflected by record low barometric pressures from the Southeast to the mid-Atlantic. Locally, the storm produced more than a foot of snow at some locations around the Washington/Baltimore area (14.1" at IAD, 13.1" at ADW), between 18" and 36" in the eastern Appalachians, and established an all-time record low barometric pressure at DCA (28.54") on the 13th. Gale force winds caused blowing and drifting snow, near-zero visibilities, and downed numerous trees and power lines, knocking out electricity to thousands of customers in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Nearly 4 feet of snow buried Grantsville, MD, setting a state single-storm snowfall record (surpassing the 42" observed at Big Piney, MD on Dec. 10-12th, 1992).

March 1993: Stormy weather dominated the month of March across the Washington/Baltimore area, with all five airports recording twice the monthly normal precipitation. Both BWI and IAD observed the wettest March on record with 8.12" and 7.65", respectively. An intense storm brought up to 3 inches of rain, gale-force winds, and urban and coastal flooding on the 3rd-5th. The "Blizzard of 1993" provided another 2" of (liquid) precipitation for some locations on the 13th. Additional storms on the 17th, 23rd, and 27th-28th brought more heavy rain to the region, pushing monthly totals to more than 7 inches at four of the five airports. Measurable precipitation fell on 16 days at DCA, producing a monthly total of 6.82" and yielding the 4th wettest March on record. Monthly snowfall topped 12 inches at 3 of the 4 airports, with the bulk of the total falling on the 13th. IAD observed the snowiest March on record while BWI recorded the most snow in March since 1964. DCA recorded 6.6" during the month, producing the snowiest March since 1978 and the snowiest month since December 1989.

Temperatures were significantly below normal across the region, with all five airports recording monthly departures below -3°F. DCA averaged 5°F below normal, due mainly to a prolonged stretch (10th-23rd) of unusually cold weather which contributed to the coldest March since 1984. The two-week cold spell was the longest period of subnormal daily temperatures at DCA since December 1989 and was highlighted by four days (14th, 15th, 18th, and 19th) with daily departures of -20°F or lower. The high failed to top 32°F at DCA on the 14th and a record daily low was established on the morning of the 15th when the mercury plunged to 15°F. IAD also recorded a record daily low on the 15th when the temperature fell to -1°F, the lowest reading at that location since December 25th, 1989. There were no 70°F or greater readings observed at DCA in March the first such occurrence since 1984.

MARCH 1993 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm	Snow
National (DCA)	49.9	34.5	42.2	47.2	-5.0	69/30	15/15	6.82	3.17	+3.65	6.6
Baltimore (BWI)	47.5	31.3	39.4	44.1	-4.7	67/30	10/15	8.12	3.38	+4.74	12.7
Dulles (IAD)	48.7	29.9	39.3	43.2	-3.9	69/30	-1/15	7.65	3.17	+4.48	15.5
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	49.9	31.0	40.5	44	-3	70/30	6/15	8.10	3.7	+4.4	8.0
Andrews AFB (ADW)	48.3	32.0	40.1	45	-5	67/30	13/15	7.77	3.6	+4.2	13.4

LOOKING AHEAD: A wet start = a wet year?

After an unusually wet March across the Washington/Baltimore area, precipitation totals are running above normal at most locations. For DCA, the January-March period of 1993 has produced 11.99" of precipitation, the wettest start to a year since 1979. Thus, the question arises: does a wet first quarter necessarily portend a wet year? Below is a list of the ten wettest January-March periods in Washington and the corresponding annual precipitation totals. (1961-1990 Normals: Jan-Mar: 8.6"; Annual: 38.63")

Year	Jan-Mar Total (Inches)	Annual Total (Inches)
1884	19.67	49.96
1891	19.47	52.95
1882	15.93	46.79
1881	15.76	42.20
1886	15.74	58.17
1903	15.31	43.55
1899	15.23	44.02
1892	15.18	42.34
1979	14.71	47.33
1936	14.17	41.11