

MAY 1996: After a mild end to April, cool and wet conditions returned to the Washington/Baltimore area during May. Monthly temperature departures of -2°F or lower were reported at four of the five airports, including DCA marking the sixth month out of the last seven with subnormal temperatures. There were 17 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA, including 14 days when highs failed to reach 70°F . Much of the cool weather was due to significant cloud cover and/or precipitation. A cool blast of Canadian air around mid-month yielded lows in the thirties across much of the local area, including a reading of 32°F at IAD on the 14th, their latest freeze on record. A few days later, a short-lived summerlike heat wave enveloped the local region as readings soared into the nineties. DCA observed a record high of 96°F on the 20th; however, by the end of the month, cool conditions had returned with highs on Memorial Day only in the fifties (more than 20°F below normal).

Precipitation was above normal at all five of the local airports with monthly departures between 1 and 3 inches reported. Measurable precipitation was recorded on 15 days and on at least one day on 3 of the 4 weekends. Most of May's rainfall came during the first third of the month and included eight consecutive days (2nd-9th) with at least a trace of precipitation. Around mid-month another cool and rainy period occurred from the 15th-17th. Toward the end of the month more cool, wet and dreary weather prevailed during most of the Memorial Day weekend. Cloud cover also dominated much of the month, yielding the cloudiest May in six years at DCA (only 48% of possible sunshine). There were 16 cloudy days reported at DCA, including four days around Memorial Day when zero sunshine was observed.

MAY 1996 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures ($^{\circ}\text{F}$)				Extreme/Day			Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmiT	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm	Yr to Date
National (DCA)	72.6	55.1	63.9	66.4	-2.5	96/20	42/13*	4.96	3.66	+1.30	18.73
Baltimore (BWI)	70.8	50.4	60.6	63.4	-2.8	94/20	34/14	5.69	3.72	+1.97	22.18
Dulles (IAD)	70.0	49.3	59.7	62.2	-2.5	93/20	32/14	7.07	4.02	+3.05	22.51
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	71.1	50.8	61.0	64	-3.0	95/19#	35/1	6.83	3.8	+3.0	24.56
Andrew AFB (ADW)	73.3	54.5	63.9	64	0	95/19#	40/1	6.35	4.0	+2.4	19.89

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

SPRING (MARCH-MAY) 1996: Subnormal temperatures and above normal precipitation prevailed across most of the Washington/Baltimore area for the third consecutive season. The season began much the same way as winter with cold, wet and occasionally snowy conditions. March featured above normal precipitation and snowfall (the third consecutive snowier than normal month across the local area). Wintry precipitation fell on the 2nd, 8th and 28th, adding 5-7 inches of snow to the already-established record snow season (Oct-Apr) totals at the airports. Another storm on the 19th generated over an inch of rain at many locations (the most precipitation since the Blizzard of '96 on January 6-8) and was accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms. Wet weather carried over into April with monthly surpluses of over one half inch reported at all five local airports. Wintry precipitation was observed on the 6th and again on the 9th-10th as a mixture of rain, sleet and snow fell across the area. The latter storm left 2.5" of snow at IAD, raising their all-time record seasonal snowfall to 61.9". The final month of meteorological Spring was also wet with monthly totals of 5 or more inches common across the Washington/Baltimore area. There were numerous days with either measurable precipitation and/or cloud cover which combined with unseasonably cool temperatures, made it feel more like mid-March rather than late Spring.

As mentioned earlier, subnormal temperatures prevailed for the third consecutive season at many locations and for the sixth month out of the last seven at DCA. Seasonal departures of -2°F and lower were reported at 3 of the 5 airports. A very cold March was observed across the Washington/Baltimore area with monthly departures reaching -4.3°F at DCA. A blast of Arctic air around the end of the first week produced daily average temperatures more than 20°F below normal on the 8th and 9th as highs remained below freezing. During this cold spell, lows dropped into the teens across the local area and as low as 7°F at IAD on the 10th. For the month, there were 22 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA. April also began with unseasonably cool temperatures, but these were limited to the first third of the month as more springlike weather finally arrived around the 11th. A day later highs topped 80°F for the first time since October 12, 1995 at DCA. A prolonged stretch of warm weather occurred from the 18th-23rd when highs each day soared above 70°F . The first 90°F reading in the local area (90°F at ADW on the 22nd) was also reported during this period. Abnormally cool weather returned in May (monthly departures around -2°F at most locations), mainly due to persistent cloud cover and/or frequent precipitation. Daily average temperatures often fell short of normal, especially during the last week of the month, when each day was 10°F or more below normal. A short-lived hot spell enveloped the area toward the end of the third week as highs soared above 90°F on three consecutive days (19th-21st), establishing daily records at some locations.

SPRING 1996 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures ($^{\circ}\text{F}$)				Extreme/Mth-Day			Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmiT	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm	Snow
National (DCA)	63.8	45.3	54.5	56.8	-2.3	96/5-20	17/3-9	11.73	9.54	+2.19	5.2
Baltimore (BWI)	62.3	40.7	51.5	53.7	-2.2	94/5-20	11/3-9*	13.02	10.19	+2.83	7.6
Dulles (IAD)	62.7	39.9	51.3	52.7	-1.4	93/5-20	7/3-10	14.28	10.30	+3.98	8.5
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	63.1	40.9	52.0	54	-2	95/5-19#	12/3-4%	14.68	10.7	+4.0	6.6
Andrew AFB (ADW)	64.7	44.8	54.7	54	+1	95/5-19#	16/3-10	12.33	10.6	-1.7	5.3

Other occurrences: * March 10th; # May 20th; % March 9th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO SUMMER: A fourth consecutive season with cool and wet conditions?

After a third consecutive season with subnormal temperatures and above normal precipitation, the next question is whether this type of scenario will carry over into the summer? If so, it would only be the eighth time when there have been four consecutive seasons (or more) with cooler and wetter than normal weather since records began in Washington (1871). The following is a list of all occurrences of at least 4 consecutive seasons with the aforementioned conditions.

- Winter 1887-88 - Autumn 1889 (8 consecutive seasons)
- Spring 1882 - Summer 1883 (6 consecutive seasons)
- Autumn 1872 - Autumn 1873 (5 consecutive seasons)
- Summer 1885 - Summer 1886 (5 consecutive seasons)
- Summer 1911 - Summer 1912 (5 consecutive seasons)
- Autumn 1902 - Summer 1903 (4 consecutive seasons)
- Summer 1942 - Spring 1943 (4 consecutive seasons)