

JANUARY 2003: The first month of 2003 was highlighted by subnormal temperatures and precipitation across the Washington/Baltimore area. A near constant flow of Arctic air, originating in northern Canada and Siberia, swept into the local area, yielding the coldest January since 1994 at most locations. Monthly temperature departures of -3.8°F, -4.0°F, and -3.3°F were recorded at DCA, BWI, and IAD, respectively. There were 24 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA. In sharp contrast to recent Januaries, many days featured bitterly cold readings. At DCA, highs remained at or below freezing on 7 days (BWI, 11 and IAD 12), the most such days since January 2000 at DCA. In addition, cold conditions prevailed on most nights. DCA recorded 25 days with lows at or below 32°F (BWI and IAD observed 28 such days).

Two significant cold periods occurred from the 15th-19th and 21st-24th as daily temperatures averaged between -5°F and -15°F below normal across the region. During the initial cold wave, many locations recorded their longest period of subfreezing weather conditions since February 1-6, 1996. Minimum temperatures bottomed out in the single digits in many areas on the 18th, including 3°F at IAD and 5°F at BWI, (their lowest reading since 1/19/97). During the second blast of arctic air, maximum temperatures struggled to climb above 20°F on the 23rd (more than 20°F below normal) and along with gusty northwest winds, produced dangerous wind chills as low as -10°F. The high of 22°F at DCA on the 23rd marked the coldest day in Washington since Feb. 3, 1996. Above normal temperatures were limited to the 1st-4th and 8th-10th, with highs generally above 50°F on most days. The warmest day of the month occurred on the 9th, when highs peaked at 62°F at DCA, 60°F, at IAD and 59°F at BWI. January 2003 and December 2002 will be noted as the first back-to-back winter months with subnormal temperatures since the winter of 1995-96 (see "Looking Ahead").

After three consecutive months with above normal precipitation, drier than normal conditions prevailed across the area. In fact, January was the driest month since June 2002 across most of the region. The majority of the precipitation fell during the first five days. A soaking rain on New Year's Day produced over 1.50" of precipitation across much of the area, including IAD where 1.73" of rain was recorded. It marked the wettest New Year's Day ever observed at DCA (1.52") and IAD. Just two days later, another all-day rain produced nearly half an inch of precipitation at the three airports. The first three days of January 2003 produced more precipitation than January and February 2002, combined. The third storm in less than a week struck the region on the 5th, but this time it was accompanied by colder weather. The storm strengthened as it moved across the local area, producing between 3" and 5" of snow and creating hazardous road conditions. The impacts were minimized because the snowfall occurred on a Sunday. The following three weeks produced numerous small snows but snowfall totals of only an inch or less at most locations.

JANUARY 2003 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	37.3	24.8	31.1	34.9	-3.8	62/9	11/18	2.41	3.21	-0.80	4.5
Baltimore (BWI)	35.3	21.3	28.3	32.3	-4.0	59/9	5/18	2.59	3.47	-0.88	5.3
Dulles (IAD)	35.7	21.0	28.4	31.7	-3.3	60/9	3/18	2.69	3.05	-0.36	5.1
Andrews AFB (ADW)	36.4	22.7	29.7	N/A	N/A	61/9	7/18	5.58	3.1	+0.25	5.6

LOOKING AHEAD: *First Winter (December-February) With All 3 Months Recording Below Normal Temperatures.*

As mentioned earlier, the first two month's of Winter have been colder than normal across the Washington/Baltimore area. The question arises whether February will also produce subnormal temperatures? If so, it would be the first winter since 1995-96 whereby all 3 months were colder than normal at DCA. Below is a list of the winter monthly temperatures at DCA since the winter of 1995-1996 along with the corresponding monthly temperature departures. [DCA Temperature Normals: December: 39.5°F; January: 34.9°F; February: 38.1°F]

Winter	December		January		February	
	Avg. Temp.	Dep. Nml.	Avg. Temp.	Dep. Nml.	Avg. Temp.	Dep. Nml.
1995-96	35.6	-3.9	32.9	-2.0	37.3	-0.8
1996-97	43.0	+3.5	37.0	+2.1	44.7	+6.6
1997-98	41.0	+1.5	43.0	+8.1	43.4	+5.3
1998-99	44.4	+4.9	38.2	+3.3	41.0	+2.9
1999-2000	42.0	+2.5	35.9	+1.0	42.5	+4.4
2000-01	31.8	-7.7	35.5	+0.6	40.9	+2.8
2001-02	45.5	+6.0	41.6	+6.7	42.6	+4.5
2002-03	37.2	-2.3	31.1	-3.8	31.7	N/A