

**DECEMBER 1989:** Record and near-record cold gripped much of the eastern two-thirds of the nation during the month, including the Washington-Baltimore area. Temperatures averaged 11.0°F or more below normal at all five airports, ranking this December as the coldest ever at IAD and BWI and the second coldest at DCA (temperature records date back to 1963, 1950, and 1870, respectively). Historical monthly average temperatures were not available for ADW or DAA, but this December probably ranked as the coldest at both locations. The 11.0°F monthly departure from normal at DCA was the largest since -11.5°F during Feb. 1934. In addition, not only were several daily minimum temperature records tied or broken, especially at IAD and BWI, but many record low maximum daily temperatures were also established (not available for ADW & DAA). Record daily lows included: DCA (7°F 12/23); BWI (6°F 12/19, 9°F 12/21, 4°F 12/22); and IAD, where 10 successive daily minimum temperature records were set from Dec. 14-23 (11°F 12/9, 4°F 12/10, 3°F 12/14, 5°F 12/15, 10°F 12/16, 3°F 12/17, 0°F 12/18, -2°F 12/19, 9°F 12/20, 4°F 12/21, 2°F 12/22, 4°F 12/23, -4°F 12/25, 1°F 12/27). The -2°F low on Dec. 19 was also the earliest sub-zero reading during the winter season at Dulles. Record low maximum temperatures included: DCA (17°F 12/22, 22°F 12/23, 23°F 12/24); BWI (29°F 12/8, 26°F 12/9, 20°F 12/17, 25°F 12/19, 17°F 12/22, 22°F 12/23, 23°F 12/24, 23°F 12/27); and IAD (30°F 12/8, 24°F 12/16, 21°F 12/17, 25°F 12/18, 25°F 12/19, 25°F 12/21, 15°F 12/22, 20°F 12/23, 22°F 12/24, 23°F 12/27). Andrews AFB tied their all-time December extreme minimum temperature of 6°F on Dec. 25. Temperatures failed to climb above freezing during much of mid and late December. DCA observed 252 consecutive hours below 32°F (11 p.m. Dec. 15 to 11 a.m. Dec. 26).

Even though monthly precipitation was well below normal at all five airports, December snowfall amounts were some of the largest in many years. For example, the 9.0" at DCA was the greatest total since December 1973, while IAD (11.4") and BWI (10.2") measured the most since 1982 and 1966, respectively. The 13.0" at ADW was last surpassed in 1966 when 17.5" fell (DAA historical snow data not available). Just to the south of Washington, much greater amounts fell in conjunction with the two major December snow events (Dec. 8-9 & Dec. 12-13). The first storm dropped between 9 and 10 inches of snow on an area from just southeast of Quantico, VA eastward to Salisbury, MD. The second event dumped 8-11 inches of snow from Quantico eastward to southern Delaware. Were it not for the heavy rainfall on Dec. 31, December precipitation totals at most locations would have been under an inch. Furthermore, until the New Year's Eve rain, only 0.02" of liquid precipitation had been recorded at DCA since Nov. 16. With November's subnormal precipitation, this is the first time since last December and January that DCA has observed two straight months with below normal precipitation.

**DECEMBER 1989 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:**

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm	Snow
National (DCA)	34.7	21.0	27.9	38.9	-11.0	54/2	5/22	2.10	3.18	-1.08	9.0
Baltimore (BWI)	33.1	17.5	25.3	36.5	-11.2	54/2	4/22*	2.12	3.40	-1.28	10.2
Dulles (IAD)	33.1	12.8	22.9	35.1	-12.2	52/2	-4/25	1.72	3.29	-1.57	11.4
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	34.8	16.8	25.8	37	-11	54/2	0/17	2.35	3.3	-0.9	12.8
Andrews AFB (ADW)	33.6	19.3	26.5	38	-11	56/2	6/25	1.63	3.4	-1.8	13.0

Other dates of occurrence: \*Dec. 23

**LOOKING AHEAD - JANUARY 1990:**

If January were to copy November's and December's above normal snowfall, it would be the first time since December 1963-March 1964 that there have been at least three consecutive months with surplus snowfall at DCA. The last time that Washington recorded above normal snowfall in November, December, and January was over 70 years ago (Nov. 1917-Jan. 1918) when 2.5", 6.8", and 22.6", respectively, whitened the city.

**COMING LATER IN JANUARY:**

- ★ The 1989 Review
- ★ The 1980's in Review

After an extremely cold December, how did temperatures in that ensuing January behave? Below is a summary of the top 10 coldest Decembers at DCA followed by the preceding January:

	Avg(°F)	Dep(°F)		Avg(°F)	Dep(°F)		Avg(°F)	Dep(°F)		Avg(°F)	Dep(°F)
Dec 1876	26.5	-12.4	Jan 1877	29.4	-5.8	Dec 1910	30.5	-8.4	Jan 1911	38.2	+3.0
Dec 1917	27.9	-11.0	Jan 1918	23.7	-11.5	Dec 1886	30.7	-8.2	Jan 1887	32.9	-2.3
Dec 1989	27.9	-11.0	Jan 1990	?	?	Dec 1904	30.9	-8.0	Jan 1905	29.8	-5.4
Dec 1880	29.0	-9.9	Jan 1881	29.4	-5.8	Dec 1960	31.0	-7.9	Jan 1961	29.8	-5.4
Dec 1872	30.3	-8.6	Jan 1873	30.9	-4.3	Dec 1964	31.1	-7.8	Jan 1965	33.4	-1.8