OCTOBER 1990: While October is usually known for pleasant, tranquil conditions, October 1990 recorded several dynamic weather events that are often associated with other seasons and even other areas of the country. As the cover noted, three events stood out.

On October 18, the passage of a strong cold front abruptly ended a series of unseasonably warm and relatively dry days [Oct. 6–17]. Up to that point, only a third of an inch of rain had fallen at DCA. Abundant moisture from the Gulf of Mexico and an intense upper–level system, along with a strong cold front during maximum heating (late afternoon), led to an outbreak of severe weather more typical of spring and the central U.S. Severe thunderstorms with wind gusts over 50 mph were reported at both DCA and IAD, and 1.67" and 1.66" of rain were measured, respectively. Three confirmed tornadoes hit close to the Washington/Baltimore area (Kensington and Reisterstown, MD and Remington, VA), causing extensive but localized damages, while two others struck further south in Orange and King William (VA) counties.

Less than a week later (Oct. 22–23), a torrential soaking rain brought over an inch to all areas, with the largest amounts in the western and southern suburbs (generally between 3 and 6 inches). Several observers noted that the rain fell as hard as they had ever recorded in October. Small stream and urban flooding was widespread throughout the area. Three days later, strong north–northwesterly winds with gusts to 45 mph raked the region as an intense ocean storm developed off Cape Hatteras, NC and moved up the Atlantic Coast. Winds up to 92 mph were reported near Norfolk, VA, and the bridge to the Outer Banks of North Carolina was cut, stranding thousands on the islands.

October 1990 temperatures averaged more than 3°F above normal at most of the airports. The positive monthly departures were mainly due to a very warm period during the first 18 days of the month when highs were regularly in the seventies and eighties. Within this 18–day period, summer–like weather occurred during Oct. 6–15 when the temperature averaged 73.2°F, or +12.0°F above normal at DCA. Colder air later in the month resulted in general frosts on many nights throughout much of the area, although National Airport's lowest reading was only 35°F on the 27th. Overall, this was the fourth, fifth, and tenth warmest October at IAD, BWI, and DCA [temperature records began in 1963, 1950, and 1871], respectively.

OCTOBER 1990 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)		
Location	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm
National (DCA)	72.5	52.7	62.6	59.3	+3.3	86/9,10	35/27	3.30	2.90	+0.40
Baltimore (BWI)	72.0	49.3	60.6	56.9	+3.7	86/9	30/27	2.57	3.11	–0.54
Dulles (IAD)	71.4	45.7	58.5	55.3	+3.2	87/9	27/30	6.53	3.01	+3.52
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	72.6	48.3	60.5	57	+3	86/7	30/27	6.74	3.4	+3.3
Andrews AFB (ADW)	71.1	48.1	59.6	58	+2	85/9	29/30	3.03	3.3	–0.3

LOOKING AHEAD: THE FIRST INCH OF SNOW AT DCA

With all the airports (except the "urban heat island" DCA) recording their first freezes of the 1990–1991 season during late October, the next logical question is when will the first inch of snow fall? The average date at DCA is Dec. 15, but during the past 10 years, this date can greatly vary at National as shown below. The earliest significant snowfall (>1") at Washington probably occurred during October 1925 (2.2") and October 1940 (1.5"), while no significant snow occurred during the 1972–1973 season (total=0.1") and 1975–1976 season (total=2.2").

Winter Season	First 1" snow	Winter Season	First 1" snow
1989–1990	Nov. 22	1984–1985	Jan. 4
1988–1989	Dec. 9	1983–1984	Jan. 11
1987–1988	Nov. 11	1982–1983	Dec. 12
1986–1987	Jan. 22	1981–1982	Dec. 15
1985–1986	Dec. 20	1980–1981	Dec. 31