

FEBRUARY 1996: The month began with the coldest air of this Winter. Temperatures during the first week averaged nearly 15°F below normal at DCA and included 5 consecutive days (1st–5th) with subfreezing highs. At the peak of the cold air outbreak, highs only reached the teens on the 4th, and subzero lows were observed across most of the Washington/Baltimore area on the 5th. For the next two weeks temperatures averaged near normal, then a dramatic warm-up occurred and springlike conditions enveloped the area from the 21st through the 28th. Highs soared above 60°F on six days and topped the 70°F mark on the 25th. However, a return to colder than normal conditions occurred on "Leap Day" (29th) with highs only in the thirties.

Precipitation was below normal at the three major airports, but typical of this Winter, much above average snowfall was measured across the entire region. A snowstorm on the 2nd and 3rd generated 6–10 inches across most of the local area, and another storm on the 16th produced similar snowfall totals. These two storms pushed seasonal snowfall totals to more than 50 inches at both BWI and IAD and over 40 inches at DCA their snowiest season on record, while some suburban locations reported more than 60 inches. Most signs of Winter had vanished by the end of the month as springlike weather dominated during the latter part of February. Mild conditions and showers on the 20th–23rd melted most of the snow and created dense fog.

FEBRUARY 1996 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	Dep	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	Dep	Snow
National (DCA)	44.6	29.9	37.3	37.5	-0.2	72/25	5/5	1.99	2.71	-0.72	15.2
Baltimore (BWI)	43.4	28.0	35.7	34.8	+0.9	72/25	-1/5	2.36	3.12	-0.76	19.0
Dulles (IAD)	43.8	25.6	34.7	33.6	-1.1	71/25	-10/5	2.62	2.81	-0.19	16.4
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	44.6	26.0	35.3	36	-1	70/25	-8/5	3.18	3.0	-0.2	15.1
Andrew AFB (ADW)	46.1	30.6	38.4	36	-2	72/25	-2/5	3.56	2.8	-0.3	23.5

WINTER (DECEMBER 1995–FEBRUARY 1996): After a relatively dry and cold December, an unabated series of intense winter storms in January and February produced record seasonal snowfall totals across the local region. The epic storm was the "Blizzard of 1996" which produced the largest single-storm snowfall total at IAD (24.5"), second largest at BWI (22.5"), and the fourth largest snowfall in Washington (17.1" at DCA). During the height of the storm, a new 24-hour record snowfall occurred at IAD when 19.8" was measured on the 7th. The storm left the city virtually paralyzed all week and forced the closure of the three commercial airports, businesses, federal government and area schools. Additional snows on the 9th (2–7 inches) and the 12th (5–11 inches) brought weekly snowfall totals to as much as three feet in some areas. A week later, a brief warm spell coupled with heavy rains on the 18th and 19th caused rapid snowmelt and runoff and the worst flooding since June 1972 (Hurricane Agnes) along portions of the Potomac. Raging floodwaters washed away large sections of the towpath and berms along the C&O Canal and caused millions in damage, according to press reports. The final month of Winter featured two more snowstorms (2nd–3rd and 16th), each producing 6–10 inches and pushing seasonal snow totals over 40 inches throughout the local area and more than 60 inches in some suburban areas.

Despite what seemed like a long and cold winter, seasonal temperatures were only slightly below normal across most of the local area. DCA recorded the largest seasonal departure (-1.9°F), due mainly to a very cold December. A persistent flow of cold, Canadian air dominated the region during the first month of Winter, yielding 24 days with at or below normal temperatures at DCA, including 23 days with lows of 32°F or lower. Below normal temperatures continued throughout most of January with the lowest readings occurring around and shortly after the "Blizzard of '96". During this time, highs remained below freezing from the 6th–12th and included the areas first subzero temperature of the Winter (-2 at IAD on the 9th). Short lived mild spells occurred during the latter half of the month and were significant enough to pull monthly departures back to near normal at most locations. The final month of Winter commenced with the coldest air of the season as Arctic air infiltrated the region. Subzero lows were common across the area on the morning of the 5th and at scattered locations on the 6th. Once again, a significant warm-up occurred during the latter stages of the month as highs rose into the sixties and seventies. In addition, there were seven consecutive nights (21st–27th) when lows failed to drop below 40°F at DCA. The late-February mild spell offset the extreme cold early in the month and resulted in near normal monthly temperatures.

WINTER 1995–1996 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Mth–Day		Precipitation (In)				
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	Dep	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	Dep	Snow	Dep
National (DCA)	42.4	28.1	35.3	37.2	-1.9	72/2–25	5/2–5	9.17	8.55	+0.62	40.3	24.7
Baltimore (BWI)	41.3	26.3	33.8	34.5	-0.7	72/2–25	-1/2–5	11.82	9.58	+2.24	53.9	38.0
Dulles (IAD)	41.3	23.8	32.6	33.2	-0.6	71/2–25	-10/2–5	10.28	8.73	+1.55	49.8	31.1
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	42.4	25.0	33.7	35	-1	70/2–25	-8/2–5	13.56	9.1	+4.5	46.6	29.7
Andrew AFB (ADW)	44.1	28.5	36.3	36	0	72/2–25	-2/2–5	10.31	9.3	+1.0	53.1	36.7

LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH: Thinking Spring?

After a relatively cold and very snowy Winter, many people are thinking about spring and the warm, tranquil conditions that often occur. However, since March is a transitional month from winter to spring, it can be a month of extremes. Below is a list of some notable March climatological statistics for Washington since records began in 1871.

Temperature Extremes

Precipitation Extremes

	Year	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Dep. Nml. (°F)
Coldest:	1885	34.5	-12.7
Warmest:	1921 & 1945	55.5	+8.3

	Year	Total (In.)	Dep. Nml. (In.)
Wettest:	1891	8.84	+5.67
Driest:	1910	0.57	-2.60
Snowiest:	1914	19.3	+17.7

- Extreme minimum temperature: 4°F (March 4, 1873)
- Extreme maximum temperature: 93°F (March 23, 1907)
- Most days with lows at or below 32°F: 24 (1960)
- Most days with highs at or above 90°F: 3 (1907)
- Most consecutive days with highs at or below 32°F: 5 (1885)
- Most consecutive days with highs at or above 90°F: 2 (1907)

- Most Precipitation in one day (liquid): 2.79" (1881)
- Most snowfall in one day: 11.3" (1942)