

DECEMBER 1997: Relatively mild weather accompanied by subnormal precipitation highlighted the final month of 1997. Except for a brief blast of Arctic air at month's end, temperatures were mainly at or above normal. In fact, at DCA there were 20 such days, including 2 days when highs topped 60°F. In addition, there were only 11 days with lows of 32°F or less.

Precipitation was below normal across the Washington/Baltimore area with monthly totals of about two inches common. DCA recorded only 1.74" (the lowest December total since 1988) while BWI observed its 12th driest (2.05") December on record and IAD recorded the 10th driest such month (1.92"). In addition, less than half an inch of precipitation fell during the first 3 weeks at both DCA and BWI. Once again, December snowfall was below normal at DCA (the eighth consecutive year); however, some of the northern and western suburbs of Washington and Baltimore reported slightly above average monthly totals. At IAD, 4.7 inches was reported. The most significant snowfall came on the 29th and 30th as a strong storm system moved through the mid-Atlantic region. The storm blanketed most of the northern and western suburbs with 1-3 inches of snow and between 1 & 2 feet across portions of the Shenandoah Valley and central Appalachians.

DECEMBER 1997 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)	48.2	33.8	41.0	39.4	+1.6	62/20	24/31	1.74	3.12	-1.38	0.1
Baltimore (BWI)	47.3	29.5	38.4	36.7	+1.7	62/16	21/15	2.05	3.41	-1.36	0.4
Dulles (IAD)	46.5	28.0	37.2	35.4	+1.8	62/19	19/15	1.92	3.22	-1.6	4.7
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	50.1	31.5	40.8	N/A	N/A	64/20	25/13*	1.68	3.3	-1.6	T
Andrews AFB (ADW)	47.3	30.2	38.8	N/A	N/A	73/10	21/15	1.80	3.4	-1.6	T

Other Occurrences: January 15th, 16th, 28th, 29th & 31st.

ANNUAL (JANUARY-DECEMBER) 1997: A mild winter with subnormal snowfall, an extended period of excessive dryness during the late Spring, summer and early Autumn, and frequent week ending rainfall during the last half of Fall highlighted the weather in the Washington/Baltimore area during 1997. Annual precipitation totals across the area were below normal and about 20 inches less than those recorded in 1996. There were only 3 months (Mar., Oct., & Nov.) with wetter than normal conditions at DCA. Unlike the year before, the Winter was more placid as snowfall was infrequent and well below average, with only 6.5" recorded at DCA, 12.4" at BWI and 15.6" at IAD. The season's largest snowfall occurred on February 8th with up to 8" of wet snow in some areas. DCA's 1996-97 winter snowfall total of 6.5" was a mere 15% of what fell during the previous winter (1995-96) and less than 50% of the winter average. Spring precipitation was near normal, but the bulk of the total occurred during March with more than two inches of rain soaking parts of the local area between the 1st and 3rd. March precipitation totals between 4 and 6 inches were recorded at the five airports. The month ended on a wintry note as heavy snow fell across northeastern Maryland, blanketing Harford County, MD with up to a foot and up to six inches in Baltimore. Both April and May had similar rainfall totals with little falling until the last week of each month. In several locations, the soaking rainfall over Memorial Day weekend totaled more than three inches, resulting in the largest storm total of the year. During the Summer, rainfall was sporadic and was often preceded by extended periods of dryness. Seasonal deficits between 2 and 3 inches were common across the local area, but much greater in central Maryland. DCA recorded its driest July (1.14") in more than 30 years. An all-day soaking rain occurred on August 20th, generating 1-4 inches of rain, but came too late to benefit local crops and gardens. As a result, some counties were declared federal disaster areas due to substantial crop losses. The dry conditions continued during the first half of Autumn with less than two inches of rainfall observed at most locations from September through the first half of October. However, a significant change in the jet stream commenced in mid-October, resulting in 7-9 inches of rain during the last half of Fall. The most significant autumn storm occurred during the 7th and 8th of November when over two inches of rain soaked most of the local region (3.26" at BWI). Total rainfall during the 3-day period of November 7-10 was higher than 6 other months at DCA (7 at both BWI and IAD). One noteworthy aspect of the Autumn rainfall was that 92% of the seasonal total fell between Friday and Sunday of each week. That pattern broke in December however, as subnormal precipitation and snowfall was recorded across most of the area.

Near normal annual temperatures prevailed across the Baltimore/Washington area during 1997, despite several month's with subnormal temperatures. Most of the warmer than normal conditions occurred during winter months and early Spring. The year got off to a warm start as abnormally warm mid-winter weather prevailed from January 3rd-6th, as highs soared into the sixties and seventies. In fact, the 73°F reading at DCA on the 4th was the highest January temperature in more than twenty years. The mild winter weather yielded the sixth warmest such season on record at DCA (7th at BWI, 4th at IAD) with seasonal temperature departures over +3°F reported at all three airports. There were 57 winter days with at or above normal temperatures at DCA, including 20 days with 60°F+ highs. Arctic air was infrequent and short-lived with only 6 winter days with highs at or below freezing. In addition, the Winter produced only 39 days with lows of 32°F or lower at DCA. Above normal temperatures continued through March with 11 days of 60°F+ recorded and only two days with lows at or below freezing at DCA, the fewest since 1973. Persistently cool temperatures prevailed during the last two month's of Spring and included a low of 28°F on the April 10th at DCA (the lowest reading since January 30th, 1997) and only 6 days in May with 80°F+ highs, including one day with 90°F+ readings. Cool conditions continued through the first half of June, with temperature departures between -9 and -15°F observed at DCA between the 2nd and 8th. A dramatic change occurred during the last third of the month, as more summer-like conditions prevailed. Highs at or above 90°F were reported on nine consecutive days (20th-28th), including a high of 100°F at DCA on the 25th. Despite the warm end, June 1997 finished as the coolest in five years in Washington. July featured several intense periods of heat, but also some chilly temperatures. Readings above 90°F occurred on 18 days, including 10 days with highs above 95°F and two days with 100°F+ readings. In sharp contrast, a new low maximum temperature record was established on the 24th at DCA with a high of only 69°F. In August, temperatures were at or below normal on 21 days, but the month will be remembered for the two days of intense heat on the 16th & 17th when DCA reached 102°F and 105°F (hottest temperature ever at the airport), respectively. September marked the eight consecutive cooler than normal such month at DCA, mainly the result of numerous cool nights, as lows routinely dropped into the 40's and 50's. IAD equaled a daily record low of 38°F on the 22nd. October was highlighted by unusually warm conditions during the first half of the month, with temperatures averaging nearly 6°F above normal at DCA. The heat was capped off with the latest 90°F+ reading (on the 6th) ever observed at DCA and brought the yearly total of 90°F+ highs to 42. More autumn-like temperatures prevailed the remainder of the month and through November. Four of the 5 airports (BWI, IAD, DAA & ADW) reported their first freeze before October's end. During November, 80% of the month featured subnormal temperatures and highs failed to reach 70°F at DCA for the first time since 1988. Warmer than normal conditions prevailed December, with monthly departures of nearly +2°F reported at the three major airports.

ANNUAL 1997 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

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	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	66.9	48.5	57.5	58.0	-0.3	105/8-17	11/1-21	33.82	38.63	-4.81	6.4
Baltimore (BWI)	65.6	43.9	54.8	55.1	-0.3	101/8-16	1/1-19	38.34	40.76	-2.42	15.2
Dulles (IAD)	64.7	42.7	53.7	53.8	-0.1	100/8-16*	2/1-19	35.74	40.24	-4.50	19.9
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	68.7	46.4	57.6	N/A	N/A	104/8-17	3/1-19	41.35	41.7	-0.3	8.4
Andrews AFB (ADW)	65.0	45.2	55.1	N/A	N/A	101/8-16	7/1-18*	37.12	42.5	-5.4	10.9

Other Occurrences: * August 17th; # January 19th

LOOKING AHEAD TO 1998: Have a great New Year!