

FEBRUARY 1997: For the third consecutive month, above normal temperatures dominated the local area. Monthly temperature departures of +6°F and higher were observed at the three major airports, resulting in the third warmest February on record at both DCA & IAD and fourth at BWI. It also marked the first time in 4 years that all three winter months were warmer than normal. There were no outbreaks of bitterly cold weather. In fact, on 21 February days, temperatures were at or above normal at DCA. The only prolonged period of cold weather occurred between the 8th and 14th, but still temperatures were only slightly below to near normal, and highs on 5 of the days were in the thirties. In addition, there were no days when highs remained below freezing. As mentioned earlier, mild weather dominated most of the month with highs soaring above 60°F on 10 days and over 70°F on 4, producing a daily record at DCA on the 27th (77°F), the highest February reading in more than 10 years.

Precipitation was below normal once again, with monthly totals over 2 inches reported at 4 of the 5 airports. There were no storm systems that dumped more than an inch of liquid, but the heaviest snowfall of the season occurred on the 8th, with accumulations between 3 and 8 inches common across the local area. The snowfall had very little impact on travel as roads remained mostly wet around Washington and also since the snow fell on the weekend. The only other wintry weather occurred on the 13th as a mixture of light snow, sleet, and/or freezing rain pelted much of the local area. Milder conditions and more rain followed within 24 hours, melting most of the ice and/or snow in most areas.

FEBRUARY 1997 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	52.8	36.6	44.7	37.5	+7.2	77/27	28/13	2.43	2.71	-0.28	4.0
Baltimore (BWI)	50.6	31.3	40.9	34.8	+6.1	76/27	18/10	2.23	3.12	-0.89	7.1
Dulles (IAD)	49.7	31.2	40.5	33.6	+6.9	74/27	18/9	1.51	2.81	-1.30	8.2
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	53.9	34.7	44.3	N/A	N/A	79/27	27/9*	2.51	3.0	-0.5	6.0
Andrews AFB (ADW)	50.0	32.5	41.3	N/A	N/A	73/27	23/10#	2.48	3.3	-0.8	8.1

Other Occurrences: * February 11th, 12th, 13th and 16th; # February 13th and 16th.

WINTER (DECEMBER-FEBRUARY) 1996-97: After 5 consecutive seasons with cooler than normal conditions, abnormal warmth dominated during the last three months, resulting in the sixth warmest winter on record in Washington. It was the first winter in four years with above normal temperatures each month of the season. Seasonal temperature departures of +4°F and higher were observed at both DCA and IAD and slightly over +3°F at BWI. The season commenced on an unusually mild note as readings soared above 60°F on December 1st and in the upper fifties on the 2nd across most of the local area. For most of the month, temperatures remained at or above normal (20 days). There was only one brief intrusion of Arctic air shortly after mid-month, which lasted for only a couple of days. Highs on the 20th failed to reach the freezing mark at any of the local airports, but a few days later readings once again topped 60°F at many locations. December temperature departures ranged from +2.8°F at IAD to +3.6°F at DCA and there were 4 days with highs above 60°F at DCA. The mild weather continued into January as abnormally warm mid-winter weather prevailed from the 3rd-6th, as highs soared into the sixties and seventies. During this period, 3 daily record highs were established at DCA (66°F - 3rd; 73°F - 4th; 71°F - 5th), 2 at BWI and 4 at IAD. In fact, the 73°F reading at DCA on the 4th was the highest January reading in more than 20 years. Cold January weather was limited to a brief blast of frigid Arctic air that enveloped the region from the 17th-19th, producing three consecutive days with subfreezing highs across the Washington/Baltimore area. However, like the month before, temperatures once again rebounded to the sixties a few days later. All three major airports reported above normal temperatures for the month with departures ranging from about +1°F at BWI to +2.4°F at DCA. There were 5 January days when highs topped 60°F at DCA (2 above 70°F - the most in any January since 1975) and only 5 days when highs failed to reach 32°F. The final month of Winter was much the same as the first two, but even milder. Monthly temperature departures exceeded +6°F at all three major airport (> +7°F at DCA), yielding the third warmest February on record at both DCA and IAD, fourth at BWI. There were 21 days with warmer than normal conditions at DCA, including 10 days with readings at or above 60°F and 4 days above 70°F (the most since 1976). The maximum temperature of 77°F at DCA on the 27th was the highest February reading since 1985. There were no blasts of Arctic air during the month and no days with highs at or below freezing. For the season, temperature departures ranged from +3.3°F at BWI to +4.4°F at DCA. There were 57 days with at or above normal temperatures at DCA, including 20 days with highs at or above 60°F. In addition, there were only 39 winter days with lows at or below freezing, the sixth lowest total ever recorded in Washington.

Seasonal precipitation was above normal, but snowfall was below average across the Washington/Baltimore area. Seasonal snowfall over 10 inches was reported at 3 of the 5 airports with totals ranging from just over 6 inches at DCA to a little more than 15 inches at IAD. A wet December accounted for most of the Winter's total precipitation. Monthly totals over 5 inches were common and for some areas it was the eleventh month in 1996 with wetter than normal conditions. Two strong storm systems produced most of the December total as over an inch of precipitation fell on the 1st and about two inches (nearly 3 inches at BWI) was observed on the 13th. Snowfall was below average with only 0.2" reported at DCA. Subnormal precipitation totals were observed in both January and February, with a 2-month total of less than 5 inches at DCA (only 6.3" of snow), a sharp contrast to last winter when DCA recorded nearly 8 inches of precipitation and more than 3 feet of snow. Most of the precipitation during January occurred between the 22nd and 26th. Frozen precipitation was limited to a couple of events, both occurring within 36 hours of each other. On January 9th, about 2 inches of snow (the first measurable amounts for many areas) blanketed the area followed not long after by an additional 1-5 inches on the evening of the 10th. There were no storms system that dumped over an inch of precipitation on the local area in February. However, the heaviest snowfall of the season did occur on the 8th as up to 8 inches of wet snow fell on the region. This snowfall pushed monthly totals at both BWI and IAD above average, but not at DCA. For the Winter, snowfall was below normal at all three major airports. In fact, the total at DCA was only about 15% of what fell during the same period last year and less than 50% of the winter average.

WINTER 1996-97 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Mth-Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snowfall
National (DCA)	48.9	34.0	41.6	37.2	+4.4	77/2-27	11/1-21	10.49	8.55	+1.94	6.5
Baltimore (BWI)	46.7	28.8	37.8	34.5	+3.3	76/2-27	1/1-19	11.85	9.58	+2.27	12.4
Dulles (IAD)	45.9	28.2	37.1	33.2	+4.0	74/1-4*	2/1-19	8.87	8.73	+0.14	15.6
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	50.2	31.9	41.1	N/A	N/A	79/2-27	3/1-19	10.78	9.1	+1.7	8.4
Andrews AFB (ADW)	46.6	30.1	38.4	N/A	N/A	73/2-27	7/1-18#	10.11	9.3	+0.8	11.6

Other Occurrences: * February 27th; # January 19th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH: Warmer than normal Winter = Warmer than normal Spring?

After one of the warmest winter's on record in Washington, our thoughts turn to Spring and whether the warmer than normal conditions will continue. Below is a list of the ten warmest winter's on record and the corresponding Spring average temperature and seasonal departure. [Normal Spring Average Temperature at DCA: 56.8°F]

Winter	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Spring	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Dep. Nml. (°F)	Winter	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Spring	Avg. Temp. (°F)	Dep. Nml. (°F)
1931-1932	44.6	1932	52.3	-4.5	1996-1997	41.6	?	?	?
1889-1890	44.3	1890	52.9	-3.9	1974-1975	41.5	1975	56.2	-0.6
1949-1950	42.9	1950	52.9	-3.9	1879-1880	41.3	1880	55.9	-0.9
1948-1949	42.2	1949	55.9	-0.9	1973-1974	41.3	1974	57.5	+0.7
1990-1991	42.0	1991	60.0	+3.2	1951-1952	40.9	1952	54.8	-2.0

Just a final reminder: PRESTO hard copy will cease after this issue. The publication will still be available via the Internet. The address for this and Climate Prediction Center products is: <http://nic.fb4.noaa.gov>