

JANUARY 1997: The second month of Winter yielded much the same result as the first in terms of temperatures. Warmer than normal conditions once again prevailed, with monthly temperatures averaging between 1°F and 3°F above normal across the Washington/Baltimore area. Warmer than normal conditions were observed on 16 days, and the month featured two significantly different and notable temperature events. During the first week (3rd–6th), abnormally warm conditions enveloped the local region, producing readings in the seventies and numerous record daily highs (3 at DCA, 2 at BWI and 4 at IAD). At DCA, highs soared to 73°F and 71°F on the 4th and 5th, respectively. Both were records for the day and were also the highest January readings in more than 20 years. In addition, daily temperature departures from the 3rd–5th were more than 20°F above normal across most of the area. Cold weather rarely lingered, but a blast of bitterly cold Arctic air settled across the Washington/Baltimore area from the 17th–19th, producing highs in the twenties and single digit lows across most of the area. DCA (the urban heat island) was the only airport that remained above 10°F during the month. Strong wind gusts accompanied the cold air outbreak producing dangerous (< -20°F) wind chills. The cold weather was short-lived, however, as highs soared above 60°F a few days later (62°F on the 23rd) at DCA. There were many nights when the mercury plunged below 32°F, but just as many days with highs over 40°F, including five (3rd–6th & 23rd) with readings at or above 60°F at DCA.

Unlike last year, 1997 commenced with both subnormal precipitation and snowfall. It was the first month with subnormal precipitation at DCA since August 1996 and the lowest monthly precipitation total since February 1996, despite 11 days with measurable precipitation. Most of the month's precipitation fell from the 22nd–26th with most areas recording about an inch. Frozen precipitation was limited to just a couple events, both occurring within 36 hours of each other. On the 9th, about two inches of snow (the first measurable snowfall of the season for many areas) blanketed the local region before briefly turning to sleet and/or freezing rain in some areas. On the evening of the 10th, a brief period of moderate snow dumped 1–3 inches across most of the area although some of the far northern and western suburbs reported as much as five inches. Thus far, the 1996–97 snow season has yielded less than 3 inches at DCA, less than 6" at BWI and only about 7.5" at IAD, a far cry from the same period last year when totals at the three airports topped 25", 35" and 37", respectively.

JANUARY 1997 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
Location	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	44.5	29.4	37.0	34.6	+2.4	73/4	11/21	2.55	2.72	-0.17	2.3
Baltimore (BWI)	41.7	23.8	32.7	31.8	+0.9	69/5	1/19	2.84	3.05	-0.21	5.0
Dulles (IAD)	41.6	23.4	32.5	30.6	+1.9	74/4	2/19	2.16	2.70	-0.54	5.5
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	45.8	27.3	36.6	N/A	N/A	75/4	3/19	2.64	2.8	-0.2	2.4
Andrews AFB (ADW)	41.8	25.4	33.6	N/A	N/A	70/4	7/18*	2.20	3.1	-0.9	2.8

Other Occurrences: * January 19th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO FEBRUARY: A Look at Subnormal October–January Snowfall?

With only 2.5 inches of snow observed at DCA through January, the question arises whether the 1996–97 snow season (Oct–Apr) will finish as one of the "least" snowy. The Washington area usually receives slightly more than 17" inches of snow in a typical year (February is normally the snowiest month: Avg.: 6.3") with about 10" falling between October and January. Snowfall records have been kept in Washington since 1888 and since that time subnormal October–January snowfall (< 10.3") occurred sixty six times. Of those 66 occurrences, 14 (21%) ended with above normal seasonal totals (> 18.2"). Since Washington has recorded only 2.5 inches of snow during this 4-month time period we will look (below) at years with similar or less such totals and the resulting monthly snowfall over the remainder of the season. The order of the list is based on the Oct–Jan total snowfall.

Total Snowfall (inches)						Total Snowfall (inches)					
Snow Season	Oct.–Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	Season	Snow Season	Oct.–Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	Season
1889–1890	0.0	1.5	5.0	0.0	6.5	1895–1896	1.4	0.1	7.7	0.1	9.3
1913–1914	0.0	8.3	19.3	0.0	27.6	1936–1937	1.5	7.7	11.0	T	20.2
1959–1960	0.0	7.2	17.1	0.0	24.3	1937–1938	1.5	1.4	2.5	T	5.4
1972–1973	0.0	0.1	T	T	0.1	1920–1921	1.7	3.1	0.0	T	4.8
1968–1969	0.2	2.2	6.7	0.0	9.1	1971–1972	1.8	14.4	T	0.6	16.8
1949–1950	0.3	T	3.1	T	3.4	1943–1944	2.1	2.5	T	T	4.6
1918–1919	0.5	2.8	T	T	3.3	1923–1924	2.2	4.9	9.3	5.0	21.4
1928–1929	0.5	7.0	T	0.0	7.5	1954–1955	2.4	4.2	T	0.0	6.6
1975–1976	0.5	0.9	0.8	0.0	2.2	1930–1931	2.5	T	T	T	2.5
1931–1932	1.0	T	4.0	0.0	5.0	1985–1986	2.5	12.9	T	T	15.4
1992–1993	1.0	4.1	6.6	0.0	11.7	1996–1997	2.5	?	?	?	?
1926–1927	1.3	1.0	T	T	2.3						

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