

JULY 1997: For the fourth consecutive month and the sixth month of 1997, subnormal precipitation was observed at the three major airports and across most of the Washington/Baltimore area. In fact, it was the driest July in more than 30 years in Washington and the driest month since January 1992 at BWI, with only slightly more than an inch of rain measured at all the major airports. The dry conditions, accompanied by occasionally hot weather, engendered the browning of lawns across the Washington/Baltimore area and hindered crop development across the region. Measurable precipitation ($\geq 0.01''$) fell on seven days at DCA, but precipitation totals were hardly significant enough to alleviate the dry conditions. In fact, the largest daily rainfall total at DCA was only 0.34'' on the 24th. Showers on the 2nd and 3rd provided most of the area with between 0.25'' and 0.50'' of rain, but farther to the south portions of Stafford County, VA and southern Maryland received over four inches of rain. For nearly the next three weeks, rainfall was almost non-existent. During this time (3rd–22nd) DCA observed a meager 0.11'', while 0.18'' fell at BWI and 0.22'' at IAD. The most significant precipitation event, locally, occurred on the 23rd and 24th as a cold front stalled across the mid-Atlantic. Two-day precipitation totals between 0.25'' and 0.50'' were reported at the three major airports. Farther south, the remnants of Hurricane Danny tracked northeastward through the Carolinas, dumping heavy rain and spawning severe weather from North Carolina to southeastern Virginia. More than 10 inches of rain fell across parts of North Carolina while more than 5 inches soaked portions of southeastern Virginia. Strong thunderstorms on the 28th, raced across most of the local area generating wind gusts near 50 mph, frequent lightning, and a very brief period of heavy rain that pushed monthly totals over an inch at most locations. For the January–July 1997 period, subnormal precipitation has been observed across most of the Washington/Baltimore area with deficits of more than 3 inches at both DCA and BWI and nearly 6 inches at IAD.

Monthly temperatures were near normal across the local area. There were a few periods of intense heat (occasionally accompanied by high humidity and poor air quality), but there were also several days with subnormal temperatures, including a brief period of abnormally cool weather. DCA recorded 90°F+ highs on 18 days (10 days > 95°F), including a stretch of 9 consecutive days (11th–19th). On two days (17th & 28th) highs reached 100°F at DCA, marking the 2nd and 3rd such occurrence of the summer-to-date. In sharp contrast, unusually cool conditions prevailed from the 23rd–25th with daily departures between –7°F and –14°F. Highs in the seventies were observed on the 23rd while readings on the 24th failed to top 70°F at the three major airports. In fact, the high of 69°F at DCA (on the 24th) established a daily record low maximum temperature. At IAD, a record daily low of 50°F was recorded on the 31st, marking the 8th day with lows in the fifties (the most such July days since 1984).

JULY 1997 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
Location	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmIT	DepNmI	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNmI	Yr to Date
National (DCA)	90.3	70.4	80.4	80.0	+0.4	100/17*	63/31	1.14	3.80	–2.66	18.66
Baltimore (BWI)	89.3	65.2	77.3	77.0	+0.3	99/15#	54/31	1.32	3.69	–2.37	20.64
Dulles (IAD)	88.4	63.0	75.7	75.6	+0.1	98/18	50/31	1.38	3.49	–2.11	17.23
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	91.1	67.3	79.2	N/A	N/A	100/16@	55/31	2.39	3.8	–1.4	21.90
Andrews AFB (ADW)	88.4	67.0	77.7	N/A	N/A	97/3%	55/31	3.50	4.3	–0.8	21.82

Other Occurrences: * July 28; # July 17th & 18th; @ July 17th, 18th & 28th; % July 15th, 16th & 18th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO AUGUST: Another Dry Month?

As mentioned above, the Washington/Baltimore area endured subnormal precipitation for the sixth month out of the last seven. Only March yielded above normal precipitation at the three major airports. Our attention now turns to August precipitation. Normally, August is the wettest month of the year at both DCA and BWI, with 3.91'' and 3.92'', respectively. The June–July 1997 period only yielded a total of 4.08'' at DCA (4.49 at BWI), making it the 10th driest such period ever recorded at DCA. Below is a look at the ten driest summers ever recorded in Washington and at BWI along with the corresponding seasonal precipitation total. [Normal Summer Total Precipitation at DCA: 11.09''; at BWI: 11.28'']

Ten Driest Summers in Washington

Year	Total Precipitation (in.)
1966	4.62
1962	4.62
1943	4.66
1964	5.06
1894	5.38
1893	5.57
1954	6.09
1930	6.11
1957	6.51
1932	6.63

Ten Driest Summers at BWI

Year	Total Precipitation (in.)
1966	4.53
1991	5.38
1954	6.02
1993	6.82
1964	7.02
1988	7.26
1962	7.51
1957	7.77
1983	8.11
1995	8.43