

OCTOBER 1997: Even though most of the Washington/Baltimore area recorded near normal monthly temperatures and precipitation, October was marked by two significantly different weather patterns. The first half featured a period of abnormal warmth accompanied by little precipitation, while the second was highlighted by cool and wet conditions. Weather more typical of late summer enveloped the local area from the 4th–10th as highs soared at or above 80°F, including the latest 90°F+ reading (90°F on the 6th) ever recorded at DCA. During the first two weeks, temperatures averaged nearly 6°F above normal at DCA and 80°F+ highs were recorded on eight days. Around mid–month, a large–scale upper air pattern over the U.S. brought dramatic changes to the region’s weather, producing readings more typical of Autumn. At or below normal temperatures were recorded on the last 17 days of the month and temperature departures near –5°F were observed at DCA. BWI recorded its first 32°F or lower reading of the season on the 23rd, bringing an end to the growing season, while IAD recorded 8 such days (the most in October since 1988). Readings in the twenties were common across most of the area on the 23rd with lows of 28°F (a daily record) and 23°F at BWI and IAD, respectively. DCA (the urban heat island) was the only local airport that did not record a freezing reading during the month.

For only the second month this year, DCA recorded above normal precipitation. In fact, wetter than normal conditions prevailed across much of the region, bringing an end to the pattern of persistent dryness. Most of the month’s rainfall occurred during the last half of the month. Very little rain fell during October, with the first two weeks producing a mere 0.02” of rain (about 1% of normal) at DCA, only a trace at BWI and 0.13” at IAD. Just like the temperatures, a dramatic change in the precipitation pattern occurred around mid–month. During the final 17 days of the month, measurable precipitation fell on 9 days at DCA (8 days at both BWI and IAD), producing 3.70” of rain (more than twice the normal) at DCA, 3.43” at BWI (the entire monthly total) and 2.62” at IAD. There were two significant week ending rain events that accounted for most of the precipitation totals during this period. On the 17th & 18th, a storm system generated up to 1.5 inches of rain across parts of the local area. A second system storm produced nearly an inch of rain across most of the local area from the 24th–25th, while a third storm a day later provided an additional 3/4 of an inch at DCA.

OCTOBER 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	Yr to Date
National (DCA)	68.9	50.3	59.6	59.7	–0.1	90/6	34/23	3.72	3.02	+0.70	27.48
Baltimore (BWI)	68.3	44.7	56.7	56.6	+0.1	89/6	28/23	3.43	2.98	+0.46	30.32
Dulles (IAD)	65.9	41.4	53.7	55.1	–1.4	85/5*	23/23	2.75	3.20	–0.45	28.34
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	70.5	46.2	58.3	N/A	N/A	91/6	28/23	4.40	3.6	+0.8	33.38
Andrews AFB (ADW)	66.7	45.3	56.0	N/A	N/A	88/6	28/29	2.66	3.6	–0.9	29.80

LOOKING AHEAD TO OCTOBER: *The first inch of snow in Washington.*

With many locations around the Washington/Baltimore area having recorded their first frost or freeze, our attention now focuses on the first inch of snow in the local area. In Washington, the largest single November snow event occurred in 1987 when 11.5 inches blanketed the airport. This particular event also tied December 17, 1932 as the greatest single event snowfall during any astronomical Autumn in Washington. The date of the first inch of snow in Washington can vary greatly from year to year. During the last ten years, it has occurred between mid–November and late January. The earliest snows ($\geq 1''$) in Washington (city) took place on October 30, 1925 (2.2”) and October 20, 1940 (1.4”) while the earliest measurable snow ever recorded at National Airport fell on October 10th, 1979 (0.3”). In contrast, no significant snowfall was observed at all during the 1972–73 season (DCA total=0.1”).

<u>Snow Season</u>	<u>First 1” (or greater) Snowfall</u>	<u>Snow Season</u>	<u>First 1” (or greater) Snowfall</u>
1996–1997	January 9	1991–1992	January 25
1995–1996	December 9	1990–1991	December 27
1994–1995	January 28	1989–1990	November 22
1993–1994	December 28	1988–1989	December 9
1992–1993	December 10	1987–1988	November 11