

JANUARY 1998: This month was similar to December 1997, with unusually mild conditions observed in the Washington/Baltimore area. Except for a brief period of Arctic air on December 31st and New Year's Day, temperatures were at or above normal on 29 of the last 30 days, resulting in monthly temperature departures exceeding +8°F at the three major airports and the warmest January in Washington since 1990 (second warmest on record at both BWI and IAD). In fact, monthly temperatures averaged more than 2°F above those reported in December, which also averaged above normal. Normally the coldest time of the year, there were only eight January days with lows of 32°F or lower at DCA, the fewest such days in more than 60 years. In addition, the first two months of Winter failed to produce a day with at or below freezing highs at any of the three major airports, the first such occurrence at DCA since December 1949-January 1950. Early in the month, an unprecedented mild spell enveloped the Washington/Baltimore area, producing a record eight consecutive days (2nd-9th) with 60°F+ highs at DCA. Record daily highs were observed on four consecutive days at IAD, tied or established at BWI on three days, and once at DCA. The unseasonable warmth even prevailed at night as lows dropped only into the forties and fifties from the 6th-9th, including a low of 57°F at DCA on the 8th (23°F above normal). In addition, lows on the 7th and 8th (61°F and 62°F, respectively) at IAD, broke the previous record highs for that location. Somewhat cooler weather prevailed during the remainder of the month, but temperatures still remained above normal every day except the 14th.

Abnormally wet weather prevailed across the local area, but included very little snowfall. Monthly precipitation totals exceeding 5 inches were observed at all five airports. Both DAA and ADW recorded more than 6.5" of rain, with 6.67" and 7.28", respectively. Ironically, the first half of the month started quite dry with less than an 0.5 inches of rain observed at both DCA and BWI. Around mid-month, a change in the weather pattern produced an active storm track and frequent precipitation across the region. On the 15th, the first in a series of storms generated soaking rains that briefly began as mixed precipitation, producing about an inch of rain. About a week later, heavy rains deluged the area, producing nearly two inches of rain and daily rainfall records at DCA, BWI and IAD. Quick on its heels, a powerful Nor'easter on the 27th-28th generated about two more inches of rain locally, over three feet of snow in portions of the the central and southern Appalachians, gale force winds, beach erosion, and property damage along the mid-Atlantic coast. Snowfall was rather sparse across the local area. In fact, DCA as well as many suburban locations recorded only a trace of snow, while up to half an inch was reported across the far northern and western suburbs. DCA has yet to record its first inch of snow, and the seasonal total of 0.1" (through January) is the least amount of snow in an October-January period since 1972-73 .

JANUARY 1998 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Month-Day			Precipitation (In)		
	AvgMx	AvgMin	AvgT	NmT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	49.9	36.0	43.0	34.6	+8.4	69/8	18/1	5.43	2.72	+2.71	Trace
Baltimore (BWI)	49.4	32.4	40.9	31.8	+9.1	68/4	17/1	5.65	3.05	+2.60	0.7
Dulles (IAD)	48.3	31.9	40.1	30.6	+9.5	69/8	10/1	5.43	2.70	+2.73	0.5
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	52.5	35.3	43.9	N/A	N/A	72/5	16/1	6.67	2.8	+3.9	Trace
Andrews AFB (ADW)	48.5	33.9	41.2	N/A	N/A	68/4*	18/1	7.28	3.1	+4.2	Trace

Other Occurrences: * January 8th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 1998: Negligible snow this Winter in Washington?

As mentioned above, there has only been 0.1" of snowfall at DCA through the first two months of the meteorological (December-February) winter. If no measurable snowfall is reported at the airport during February, the Winter of 1997-98 would finish (tied with 1972-73) as the least snowiest on record in Washington. Below is a list of the ten least snowiest winters in the Washington area since snowfall records began in 1888. Normal snowfall for the December-February period at DCA is 14.3".

Winter	December Snowfall (In.)	January Snowfall (In.)	February Snowfall (In.)	Total
1972-73	0	Trace	0.1	0.1
1949-50	Trace	0.3	Trace	0.3
1931-32	1.0	Trace	Trace	1.0
1975-76	0.4	0.1	0.9	1.4
1889-90	0	Trace	1.5	1.5
1895-96	1.2	0.2	0.1	1.5
1941-42	0.2	1.8	0.1	2.1
1926-27	1.0	0.3	1.0	2.3
1968-69	Trace	0.2	2.2	2.4
1930-31	2.5	Trace	Trace	2.5