

JANUARY 1999: For the second consecutive year, January was highlighted by well above-normal temperatures and rainfall and little snowfall across the Washington/Baltimore area. The wetter than normal conditions ended a string of six consecutive months of subnormal precipitation and alleviated the persistent drought conditions that had affected most of the region since mid-summer of last year. In fact, January precipitation totals at DCA exceeded the combined September-December 1998 total and was nearly 75% of the total for the last half of 1998. Stormy conditions commenced early in the month as a fast moving storm system generated over an inch of precipitation at most locations on the 3rd. The precipitation initially started as sleet and freezing rain, coating roads and making travel extremely hazardous (the most in a day since September 16th for some areas). Eventually, warmer air moved across most of the local region and pushed temperatures from the twenties into the fifties in just a few hours and rapidly melted the ice-coated surfaces. The first and only measurable snowfall of the month occurred on the 8th, as a steady snow started before dawn and left up to 2 to 4 inches across most of the area by early afternoon. The snow briefly changed over to sleet and freezing rain before ending later in the day and yielded up to 3/4 of an inch (liquid equivalent) in some areas. It was the first 1"+ snowfall at DCA in nearly two years (since February 8, 1997), ending the record 23-month streak of less than one-inch snowfalls in Washington. About a week later, portions of the local area endured one of the worst ice storms in recent memory. On the evening of the 14th and 15th, heavy rains accompanied by subfreezing temperatures coated trees, power lines and roads with a heavy glaze of ice in Montgomery, Howard and portions of Ann Arundel counties in Maryland as well as Fairfax and Loudoun counties in Virginia. The weight of the ice downed numerous trees and power lines, knocking out power to more than 400,000 customers, in some cases for as long as a week. The ice also made driving extremely dangerous and caused numerous airport delays. Skies cleared late in the morning on the 15th, producing some fantastic scenery, but a short while later gusty winds created additional power outages as more trees and limbs fell. Despite much warmer temperatures and melting ice on the 16th, additional power outages were reported as a cold front accompanied by brief but strong wind gusts as well as a few isolated thunderstorms (mostly south and east of Washington) moved through the region. On the 24th, another storm system dumped over an inch of rain, resulting in the wettest month for most locations since May 1998.

Cold air that swept into the region during the last week of December continued through the first eleven days of January. With the exception of a short-lived period of warmth during the height of the January 3rd storm, cooler than normal conditions prevailed from the 1st-11th. During this time, temperatures averaged more than 6°F below normal at DCA, and 7 days had highs at or below freezing (the most such days since January 1994). Lows in many of the northern and western suburbs dropped into the single digits (the lowest readings since January 1997) on the morning of the 6th, including BWI (7°F) and IAD (4°F). Less than a week later, milder air infiltrated the local area, yielding at or above normal temperatures for 18 of the last 20 days. During this time, temperatures average more than 9°F above normal at DCA and highs topped 70°F on the 23rd (more typical of late April) across most of the local area. In addition, temperatures averaged more than 12°F above normal at DCA during what is climatologically the coldest time of year (17th-26th) in Washington as highs topped 50°F on 8 of the 10 days.

JANUARY 1999 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) | 46.4 | 29.9 | 38.1 | 34.6 | +3.5 | 63/28 | 16/6 | 5.42 | 2.72 | +2.70 | 2.2 |
| Baltimore (BWI) | 44.6 | 25.5 | 35.1 | 31.8 | +3.3 | 68/23* | 7/6 | 4.70 | 3.05 | +1.65 | 3.9 |
| Dulles (IAD) | 45.1 | 24.7 | 34.9 | 30.6 | +4.3 | 71/23 | 4/6 | 5.39 | 2.70 | +2.69 | 4.1 |
| Ft. Belvoir (DAA) | 49.4 | 29.8 | 39.6 | N/A | N/A | 75/23 | 11/6 | 6.53 | 2.8 | +3.8 | 3.0 |
| Andrews AFB (ADW) | 45.6 | 28.0 | 36.8 | N/A | N/A | 72/23 | 9/6 | 4.10 | 3.1 | +1.0 | 2.5 |

Other Occurrences: * January 28th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO FEBRUARY: *Subnormal winter snowfall again?*

With only 2.7" of snowfall during December 1998 and January 1999 at DCA and only one month left in meteorological Winter (December-February) the question arises whether subnormal winter snowfall will once again be recorded at DCA. If so, it would be the 11th winter of the last 12 with less than normal snowfall. Below is a list of the last 12 winters at DCA and the corresponding monthly and seasonal snowfall totals. [Normal winter (Dec.-Feb.) snowfall at DCA: 14.3"]

| Winter | December Snowfall (In.) | January Snowfall (In.) | February Snowfall (In.) | Winter Snowfall (in.) |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1998-99 | 0.5 | 2.2 | ? | ? |
| 1997-98 | 0.1 | Trace | Trace | 0.1 |
| 1996-97 | 0.2 | 2.3 | 4.0 | 6.5 |
| 1995-96 | 1.3 | 23.8 | 15.2 | 40.3 |
| 1994-95 | 0 | 3.9 | 5.8 | 9.7 |
| 1993-94 | 2.6 | 3.5 | 3.1 | 9.2 |
| 1992-93 | 1.0 | Trace | 4.1 | 5.1 |
| 1991-92 | 0 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 6.6 |
| 1990-91 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 0.3 | 8.1 |
| 1989-90 | 9.0 | 0.2 | Trace | 9.2 |
| 1988-89 | 1.2 | 2.9 | 1.2 | 5.3 |
| 1987-88 | Trace | 13.1 | Trace | 13.1 |