

MARCH 2003: After an abnormally snowy, wet and cold winter, weather conditions more typical of the first month of spring prevailed across the Washington/Baltimore area. Temperatures and precipitation, mainly rain, were slightly above normal at all three major airports, with monthly temperatures up about .5 degrees and precipitation up between 0.16" and up 0.60". The month also featured frequent swings in daily temperatures. Most of the area experienced three days with highs only in the 30s (1st, 7th, 10th), including a maximum temperature of 34°F at BWI on the 7th. Minimum temperatures plummeted to the mid teens in many locations, with lows of 14°F at IAD on the 3rd & 4th. Meanwhile, warmer than normal conditions on the 8th & 9th pushed highs into the high 50s and low 60s (61°F at DCA on 9th). Even warmer conditions followed later in the month when highs soared into the 70s on the 18th, 25th, 26th and 29th at many locations. At IAD, mercury soared to 76°F on the 29th. The 26th featured a large variation in daily temperatures. At IAD, the low temperatures sunk to 32°F, its first freezing reading since the 15th, then the mercury rose more than 35 degrees to reach afternoon highs in the 70s.

Precipitation averaged about four inches across most the area, about a half inch above normal. The majority of the month's precipitation fell during two storms the latter half of the month. An all-day soaking rain on the 20th brought nearly two inches of rain to the region. The heavy rains, combined with high water tables, resulted in minor street and river flooding. The second storm system on the 29th and 30th started with potentially severe weather but resulted in only scattered thunderstorms, mainly south and east of Washington. Towards dawn on the 30th, a chilly rain developed and the rain changed to wet snow during the morning, bringing nearly an inch of water equivalent to the region. Ground surfaces were warm, and along with daytime heating, prevented significant accumulations of snow in the area. Still, the snow came down hard at times, depositing 1.8" at IAD and 2.6" at BWI. Elevated areas of western Montgomery County measured more than four inches of snow. More than a foot of snow accumulated in the West Virginia mountains near Canaan Valley Ski Area. Much of the area has recorded more than twice the precipitation that fell in the first three months of 2002 (12.06" at DCA vs. 5.16" thru March 2002).

MARCH 2003 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)				Extreme/Day			Precipitation (In)				
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Yr-to-Date	Snow
National (DCA)	57.0	37.2	47.1	46.5	+0.6	76/26	20/3	4.20	3.60	+0.60	12.06	0.1
Baltimore (BWI)	54.6	33.1	43.9	43.7	+0.2	75/26	17/3*	4.17	3.93	+0.24	13.46	2.6
Dulles (IAD)	56.0	32.2	44.1	43.4	+0.7	76/25#	14/3*	3.71	3.55	+0.16	11.53	1.9
Andrews (ADW)	56.7	34.8	45.7	N/A	N/A	77/26	19/3	3.33	3.60	-0.30	16.00	T

Other Occurrences: * March 4th; # March 29th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO APRIL: *The last freeze of spring?*

April is usually the last month when a 32°F or lower reading occurs in Washington until the following autumn. In fact, a freezing reading has never occurred in Washington in May, but that has not always been the case just outside of the city. Below is a list of the last date of a 32°F or lower reading at DCA and IAD for the last ten years. As one can see, this date can vary widely between the city and suburban locations.

DCA				IAD			
Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading
2002	April 7 (32°F)	1997	April 10 (28°F)	2002	May 22 (31°F)	1997	May 8 (31°F)
2001	March 28 (28°F)	1996	March 23 (32°F)	2001	April 26 (32°F)	1996	May 14 (32°F)
2000	March 19 (32°F)	1995	April 5 (30°F)	2000	April 14 (32°F)	1995	April 15 (29°F)
1999	March 23 (32°F)	1994	March 18 (31°F)	1999	April 25 (31°F)	1994	April 8 (29°F)
1998	March 25 (31°F)	1993	March 20 (29°F)	1998	April 13 (32°F)	1993	April 28 (32°F)

Latest 32°F or lower reading ever recorded in Washington: April 29 (1874)

Latest 32°F or lower reading ever recorded at IAD: May 22 (2002)