

December 2008

Temperature: Monthly temperatures averaged above normal at the three major airports with readings +0.8°F at DCA, +1.8°F at BWI and +2.3°F at IAD. DCA recorded 12 days with highs at or above 50°F. Unseasonably warm conditions occurred across the area on 10th, 15th and 28th with highs well into the 60s and soaring to 70°F at DCA on the 28th. The months' coldest conditions occurred on the 22nd when an arctic cold air mass held temperatures well below freezing for the first time this winter season. Maximum readings reached 28°F at the three major airports. It was the coldest maximum reading since February 15, 2007, at DCA. Minimum temperatures were below 20°F on 2 days at DCA, 3 at IAD and 4 at BWI.

Precipitation: Near normal precipitation fell across the area with monthly totals generally between 2.5"– 4". The three major airports recorded slightly below normal amounts: DCA, 2.97" (-0.08"); IAD, 3.19" (-0.16"); and BWI, 2.63" (-0.44"). The majority of the monthly precipitation was caused by three storm systems. The first event, on the 10th-11th, brought the months' heaviest rainfall with about 2" in many locations. Aberdeen (Harford County), MD recorded 2.36" and DCA 1.80". Some locations outside the immediate metro area recorded significantly greater amounts including 4.22" in Hollywood, MD (St. Mary's County) and 2.89" in Emitsburg (Frederick County), MD. About 0.75" of rain, mixed with sleet and short periods of freezing rain in some areas fell on the 16th. Three days later, about 0.50" rain was measured at most areas with somewhat heavier amounts across northern MD including 1.00" in Thurmont (Frederick County) and 0.96" in Taneytown (Carroll County). Snowfall totals were minimal across the area with trace amounts to less than an inch measured at most locations. Still, dangerous driving conditions with snow on roads occurred across Frederick, Carroll and portions of Howard County during a light snowfall on the 6th. Taneytown measured 1.0" and BWI 0.6". December also featured windy conditions on numerous days. On the 7th wind gusts peaked at 53 mph at Sterling, VA (Loudoun County) and 47 mph at DCA. Then on the 22nd, wind gusts to 53 mph were reported at Clarksburg, MD (Montgomery County) and 50 mph in Reston, VA (Fairfax County). On December 31, dangerously strong winds caused one fatality from a fallen tree in Loudoun County, VA, and one serious injury in Montgomery County, MD, with more than 90,000 customers without power, according to press reports. Peak wind gusts included 68 mph in Frederick, MD, and 60 mph in Vienna, (Fairfax County) VA.

DECEMBER 2008 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA

Location	Station Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (Inches)				
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNml	Snow	Yr. to Date
National (DCA)	47.9	32.6	40.3	39.5	+0.8	70/28	16/22	2.97	3.05	-0.08	T	46.49
Baltimore (BWI)	47.2	29.8	38.5	36.7	+1.8	69/28	14/23	3.19	3.35	-0.16	0.6	44.97
Dulles (IAD)	47.1	29.5	38.6	36.3	+2.3	68/28	12/23	2.63	3.07	-0.44	T	44.01

ANNUAL Temperature: For the 15th out of the last 20 years, the Washington/Baltimore area experienced above normal temperatures; departures were +1.7°F DCA, +3.1°F at BWI and +1.7°F at IAD (see cover graphic). DCA recorded above normal temperatures for 10 out of 12 months, all but May and November; IAD and BWI, 9 of 12 months, (August also below normal). The year started out warm with all three major airports setting record highs on January 8: 73°F at DCA, and 70°F at BWI and IAD. IAD also observed a record high the following day with a maximum reading of 64°F. February, March and April continued the warm trend. Highs soared into the 80s on five days from the April 11-26. BWI recorded its final freeze of the season on the April 3 (30°F); IAD, on April 16 (31°F). May was the first month of 2008 to record cooler than normal temperatures at all three airports. June brought a return to heat with a vengeance. The hottest days of 2008 occurred during a 4-day heat wave from June 7-10, bringing highs in the mid to upper 90s, including a record high of 98°F at DCA. Washington recorded 95°F or higher on 4 consecutive days, its first such occurrence since 1925. Records also include Washington's 4th hottest June on record and its hottest June since 1994. There were two reported fatalities from the June heat wave. Temperatures continued above normal through July. August brought slightly cooler than normal temperatures at BWI and IAD and near normal readings at DCA. Autumn featured near normal temperatures across the area. The season started hot; DCA's high of 95°F on September 4 tied a record set in 1985. This was DCA's 5th warmest September since 1980. October was slightly above normal, while November was the second cooler than normal month of the year throughout the area. December ended 2008 with above normal temperatures.

ANNUAL Precipitation: The area recorded above normal precipitation at all three major airports for the 6th out of the last 10 years: DCA measured 46.49" (+7.14"); BWI, 44.97" (+3.03); and at IAD, 44.01" (+2.21"). Annual precipitation totals were 17" greater at IAD, nearly 14" greater at DCA, and 10" greater at BWI than in 2007. The year started with DCA marking its driest January since 2004 and BWI and IAD, since 2002. The month's largest storm was also the first measurable snowfall for 2008. February brought above normal precipitation and two ice storms. The second storm, on the 12th, caused major transportation impacts and hundreds of accidents. Despite a somewhat dry March, excessively wet conditions prevailed across the area on in the spring. The 3-month precipitation totals were more than 20" in some locations. IAD's total of 18.26" marked its wettest spring on record. DCA's total of 18.38" is its 3rd wettest on record and wettest since 1953. BWI's total of 14.76" was its wettest spring since 1993. While not as dry as the previous summer, the region observed subnormal rainfall across the area. June started the season with numerous severe weather events, bringing above normal but highly variable precipitation to the area. Most of the rainfall arrived with thunderstorms. Three EF-1 tornadoes were reported across the region. In July, severe weather and two EF-0 tornadoes were observed. For the 3rd consecutive year, July 4 featured strong to severe thunderstorms with strong winds and hail. August ended the season with dry conditions. After a very wet September spurred by the remains of Tropical Storm Hanna and a strong coastal storm, the remainder of year recorded near normal rainfall. On December 7, a trace snowfall was recorded at IAD and DCA and slightly more (0.6") at BWI.

ANNUAL 2008 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA

Location	Station Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Total	Precipitation (Inches)		
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	MaxT	MinT		Norm	DepNml	Snow
National (DCA)	67.5	50.6	59.1	57.5	+1.6	98/6-7	16/2-11	46.49	39.35	+7.14	2.3
Baltimore (BWI)	65.8	45.7	55.8	55.6	+0.2	96/6-10	8/1-21	44.97	41.94	+3.03	4.3
Dulles (IAD)	65.9	45.4	55.7	54.6	+1.1	95/6-7*	7/1-21	44.01	41.80	+2.21	4.0

*Additional occurrences 6-10, 8-20

Looking Ahead to January: How much snow is coming? In the last 10 years, when December brought just a trace of snow at DCA, how much snow fell in the following January? Normal January snowfall at DCA: 6.2".

Year	'49-'50	'53-'54	'59-'60	'68-'69	'78-'79	'79-'80	'86-'87	'87-'88	'99-'00	'06-'07	'08-'09
December	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
January	0.3	11.3	T	0.2	4.0	8.6	20.8	13.1	14.5	1.3	?