

MARCH 1990: While March 1990 temperature departures were not nearly as large as Januarys and Februarys, temperatures still averaged significantly above normal (from 4°F at ADW & DAA up to 5.5°F at IAD). Overall, this was the third, fifth, and tenth warmest March on record at IAD, BWI, and DCA, respectively (records started in 1963, 1951, and 1871). Not surprisingly, after a record or near-record warm January and February, 1990 has the honor of having the warmest start to a year ever at DCA (see front page), IAD, BWI, and most likely ADW and DAA (data not available). Compared to this year's January and February, when temperatures averaged at or above normal nearly every day (e.g. At DCA: Jan. 30 of 31; Feb. 24 of 28), March 1990 only recorded 16 days with above normal temperatures at National Airport (15 & 14 at IAD and BWI, respectively).

The month, however, experienced an extraordinarily warm period (March 9–19) as DCA reported its second longest streak of daily record highs (4). The streak included the following daily record highs at DCA: 89°F, 87°F, 86°F, and 81°F on March 12–15; at BWI: 86°F, 85°F, 81°F, 82°F, and 79°F on March 12–16; and at IAD: 77°F, 89°F, 87°F, 88°F, 82°F, and 81°F on March 11–16. In addition, daily highest minimum temperature records were set at IAD: 53°F, 53°F, 49°F, 61°F, 64°F, and 53°F on March 12–17. Although daily temperature records were not available for Andrews AFB and Ft. Belvoir, both locations did establish new March maximum temperature records when the thermometer hit 88°F on March 14 at both locations (and March 12 at DAA), erasing the old March marks of 87°F (1945) and 86°F (1977) at ADW and DAA, respectively. Furthermore, DCA's 89°F on March 12 was the warmest reading ever recorded so early in the season and only 4°F shy of equaling the warmest March day ever in Washington (93°F on March 23, 1907). The March 12 highs at the other four stations most likely set similar records for earliest warmth.

Only a cool spell during the final 8 days of March, along with subnormal temperatures early in the month, prevented this March from being the warmest since 1946 at National. There were several hard freezes during the month as readings dipped well below 32°F on many occasions, including 13°F at IAD and 14°F at DAA on March 8, but only one low temperature record was broken (IAD: 20°F on March 28). In Delaware and eastern Maryland, sub-freezing temperatures during the last week of March damaged blooming fruit trees and probably ruined both area's peach crop.

March continued the trend of drier than normal precipitation in the Washington–Baltimore area. Four of the past five months have recorded below normal precipitation at BWI, IAD, DCA, and ADW. Soil moisture levels, however, continued adequate due to the large surplus of precipitation received during much of 1989 and the frequency of precipitation events this year. The greatest precipitation event occurred on the 17th with the departure of the record warmth, with over an inch of rain (including some thunderstorms) measured at many locations, including a maximum of 1.60" at Ft. Belvoir.

Snowfall was frequent with three measurable events recorded on the 20th, 24th, and 25th. Snowfall totals of 2.4" at DCA, 2.7" at BWI, and 6.4" at IAD was the most since 1980 at DCA and since 1984 at BWI and IAD. It was interesting to note that all of this season's snow events of at least 1 inch fell outside of the astronomical Winter (before December 21 and after March 20). Seasonal snowfall amounts, even with a nearly snow-free January and February, were only slightly below normal (departures between -2.2 & -4.6 inches), while IAD is actually slightly above normal with 23.6", or +1.6".

MARCH 1990 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA:

Station Location	Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In)			
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgI	NmlI	DepNm	MaxT	MinT	Total	Norm	DepNm	Snow
National (DCA)	60.1	40.3	50.2	45.8	+4.4	89/12	22/7	2.57	3.46	-0.89	2.4
Baltimore (BWI)	57.8	36.9	47.4	43.3	+4.1	86/12	18/8	2.54	3.72	-1.18	2.7
Dulles (IAD)	59.9	35.8	47.9	42.4	+5.5	89/12	13/8	2.78	3.43	-0.65	6.4
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	59.3	37.0	48.1	44	+4	88/12*	14/8	2.76	3.7	-0.9	3.2
Andrews AFB (ADW)	59.1	39.4	49.2	45	+4	88/14	21/7#	1.73	3.6	-1.9	0.6

Other dates of occurrence: *Mar. 14, #Mar. 8

LOOKING AHEAD – APRIL 1990:

A continuation of unseasonably warm weather?

What happened in April during the 10 warmest

January–March periods in Washington:

January–March			April		January–March			April	
Year	ObsT	DepNml*	ObsT	DepNml*	Year	ObsT	DepNml*	ObsT	DepNml*
1990	46.3	+6.8	?	?	1953	43.6	+4.1	56.1	-0.6
1949	44.3	+4.8	55.0	-1.7	1932	43.2	+3.7	52.6	-4.1
1976	44.0	+4.5	59.9	+3.2	1913	43.1	+3.6	55.5	-1.2
1974	43.8	+4.3	58.3	+1.6	1946	43.0	+3.5	56.0	-0.7
1921	43.7	+4.2	59.2	+2.5	1890	42.9	+3.4	53.6	-3.1

* Based upon 1951–1980 normals of Jan (35.2), Feb (37.5), Mar (45.8), and Apr (56.7).