

SEPTEMBER 1998: For the first September since 1989, warmer than normal conditions prevailed across the Washington/Baltimore area, with monthly temperature departures between +3°F and +6°F observed at the three major airports. Summerlike warmth dominated most of the month, producing the warmest September on record at IAD, 4th at DCA and 5th at BWI. There were 23 days with above normal temperatures at DCA. Highs topped 90°F on 10 days (1 more than during July), the most such days in September since 1980 and the first time since 1906 (5th such occurrence overall) when there were more 90°F+ days in September than in July in Washington. In addition, record daily highs were established or tied on the 27th at DCA, on two days (21st & 27th) at BWI and on 5 days (12th, 14th, 15th, 21st, and 27th) at IAD. Subnormal temperatures were limited to a four-day period from the 8th-11th and again from the 23rd-25th. Lows on the 24th dipped into the thirties across the northern and western suburbs, including IAD where the mercury fell to 38°F.

Drier than normal conditions prevailed for a third consecutive month across the Washington/Baltimore area. Monthly precipitation totals were below 2 inches at most locations, including the three major airports. There were only 7 days with measurable precipitation at DCA (6 at both BWI and IAD), and only one day with more than an inch of rain. On the 22nd, a strong thunderstorm generated brief but heavy rains across portions of the area. DCA recorded 1.24" of rain, the largest single day total since June 15th. On the 17th, strong thunderstorms generated heavy rain across portions of Loudoun & Fairfax counties in Virginia and Montgomery County, MD. IAD reported 0.62" of rain on the 17th, nearly half of the monthly total. Despite these incidents of heavy rain, drought conditions persisted across most of Maryland and northern Virginia, resulting in substantial crops losses in some areas. In addition, many leaves changed colors early or fell off of trees due to the dry conditions. Despite a significant number of tropical systems making landfall in the U.S. during the month, none provided rainfall to the immediate area. Farther south, the remnants of Hurricane Earl generated rainfall as far north as Richmond, VA and Virginia's Northern Neck region. Precipitation totals for the July-September 1998 period were only 38% of normal at DCA, 33% of normal at BWI and 28% of normal at IAD; however, January-September 1998 totals were about 3 inches above normal at both DCA (+3.33") and IAD (+2.67").

SEPTEMBER 1998 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
National (DCA)	85.2	65.6	75.4	71.3	+4.1	95/7*	51/24	1.83	3.31	-1.48	32.69
Baltimore (BWI)	83.7	59.8	71.7	68.5	+3.2	95/6*	42/24	1.27	3.41	-2.14	30.93
Dulles (IAD)	85.9	59.4	72.7	67.1	+5.6	97/6	38/24	1.26	3.36	-2.1	33.19
Ft. Belvoir (DAA)	90.7	64.6	77.7	N/A	N/A	102/14*	48/24	1.84	3.6	-1.8	39.45
Andrews AFB (ADW)	84.6	62.9	73.7	N/A	N/A	96/6	48/24	2.26	3.6	-1.3	36.36

Other Occurrences: * September 12th, 16th and 27th; # September 27th; % September 7th.

LOOKING AHEAD TO OCTOBER: The first freeze?

October is usually the month when we think about the first frost or freeze to affect the Washington/Baltimore area, especially away from the cities. Below is a list of the dates of the first 32°F or lower reading during the last ten years at DCA and IAD, along with the earliest and latest freezes on record in Washington.

Year	First 32°F (or lower) reading		Year	First 32°F (or lower) reading	
	DCA	IAD		DCA	IAD
1997	November 16	October 2	1992	October 20	October 7
1996	November 12	October 12	1991	November 4	October 8
1995	November 5	October 17	1990	November 19	October 20
1994	November 24	October 11	1989	November 18	October 23
1993	November 2	October 1	1988	November 25	October 6

Washington earliest freeze: October 10, 1895

Washington latest freeze: December 14, 1980