

Weather of 1997

Very Cool Year, Few Thunderstorms, Slightly Drier than Normal, Cold, Snowy Finish

After an extremely active weather year in 1996, the weather of 1997 was unremarkable. However, some records were set, especially in the low temperature department. Precipitation most months was near normal, with a few very dry months and one very wet one in November.

The New Year began cool, but an Indian summer quickly moved in with a record high of 71 on January 4th. This was the warmest January reading since 1972. However, just as quickly as Mother Nature had us wondering what season it was, she reminded us with a 2-week winter blast at mid-month. 12 of 13 high temperatures from the 7th-19th were below freezing, and the 17th-19th had sub-zero lows, bottoming out at -6 on the 17th. The 77-degree differential between the month's extremes set a new January record. Precipitation and snow were below normal, but there were several ice storms that hit the area.

Another ice storm greeted the area on February 4th, with 3" of snow/ice and .86" of precipitation. A snow storm dropped 5.3" on the 8th, with another 5" of snow falling from the 12th-17th. However, the rest of February was very mild and dry. The temperature reached a balmy 74 on the 27th, the warmest February reading since 1985.

March was wet and somewhat cool but with a quite variable temperature trend. An ice storm dropped an inch of ice and nearly an inch of water on the 3rd-4th. The year's heaviest rain until November (1.25") fell on the 14th. Another .94" fell on the 18th-19th, along with 1.5" of wet snow.

April was exceptionally cool and dry. The month began very windy, with snow flurries on the 1st, but temperatures shot up to 82 on the 4th, before dropping into the 40s from the 9th-13th. A low of 16 on the 10th set an all-time record low for April. The month's mean temperature of 46.1 F made this the second coldest April on record. Meanwhile it was also the second driest April, with only 1.01" of rainfall.

The exceptionally cool weather continued into May, which was the coldest May on record. The spring of 1997 was also the coldest ever, with a mean temperature of 46.5 F. The low reached a chilly 28 on the 8th, and frost was observed as late as the 29th, with a low of 34. Precipitation was well below normal again, despite frequent showers and thunderstorms.

June began very cool and wet, with 2.09" of rain falling in the first 3 days. The first week was exceptionally cool, with every day in the 50s or 60s. After the first week, summer-like temperatures finally began to creep in. While thunderstorms were few and far between in 1997, on June 18th, the area was hammered by a vicious thunderstorm that toppled trees with wind gusts over 60 mph, dumped over an inch of rain in 20 minutes and pelted us with large hail. Golf ball sized hail put dents in cars in the driveway, and a nearby car dealership reported baseball-sized hail that shattered windshields, stripped paint and caused millions of dollars in damage. It was one of the worst hail storms to ever strike the area.

July was relatively quiet, with below normal precipitation. The middle of the month was the hottest, with six consecutive days in the 90s from the 14th-19th, and a high of 94 on the 16th. However, cool, clear nights dragged temperatures below normal again. The low on the 31st was a chilly 43 F.

August continued the trend of cool temperatures, and brought near-normal precipitation. Most of the rain fell from a series of fronts passing through at mid-month. 1.22" of rain fell on the 20th. Meanwhile, the year's high temperature was matched on the 16th (94 F). However, six nights had lows in the 40s, with 44 on the 8th and 24th.

The fall of 1997 followed the suit of the previous two seasons, with subnormal temperatures. The low reached a chilly 38 on September 5th, but rebounded to 86 the following day. Precipitation was rather sparse until a strong low-pressure system dumped 1.93" of rain on the evening of the 28th. October was cool, dry and sunny. However, following the season's first freeze (32) on the 2nd, the 4th-9th saw a string of six consecutive days in the 80s. On the other hand, 7 of the final 11 days had lows in the 20s.

November was exceptionally wet and cool. 5.17" of rain fell in the first 9 days. 2.02" of rain fell from a coastal storm on the 1st-2nd, and another slow-moving low in the Mid-Atlantic region produced 3.05" of rain from the 6th-9th, with 2.21" recorded on the 7th, the year's heaviest rain day. Freezing rain fell on the 14th. The season's first measurable snow then fell on the 16th (1.0"). Temperatures reached a record low 10 degrees on the 18th. On the evening of the 26th, a thunderstorm with sleet was observed. The month finished with steady rainfall on the 30th that pushed the month's precipitation total to a whopping 7.61

inches, making it the 2nd wettest November on record. This was also the third consecutive November that ranked in the top 5 (4th) coldest on record.

December finally saw some moderation of temperatures, which were almost exactly average. The month was relatively dry and quiet, with most of the precipitation and snow falling from the 22nd on. The most substantial event was a Nor' Easter on the 29th-30th that brought 8.5" of snow, the calendar year's heaviest snowfall. A snow squall on New Year's Eve dropped another inch of snow in only 15 minutes. The year fittingly finished on a chilly note, with a low of 11 on the final day of 1997.

1997 Weather Statistics

1997 Monthly and Annual Climate Summary LaVale, MD, Allegany County Observer Nate Mullins Station Observation Time: Midnight Lat: 39.657780°, Long: - 78.821871°, Elevation 1016'										
Month	Temperature, ° F							Number of days		
	Mean Max	Mean Min	Mean Temp	Max Temp	Date	Min Temp	Date	Max ≥ 90	Max ≤ 32	Min < 32
Jan	34.7	18.5	26.6	71	4	-6	17	0	17	28
Feb	45.6	24.7	35.2	74	27	6	13	0	1	24
Mar	49.2	28.7	38.9	74	28	16	17	0	1	23
Apr	59.4	32.7	46.1	82	4	16	10	0	0	18
May	67.6	40.9	54.3	89	19	28	8	0	0	3
Jun	79.0	54.2	66.6	92	21	40	6*	5	0	0
Jul	83.3	57.8	70.6	94	16	43	31	8	0	0
Aug	80.9	57.2	69.0	94	16	44	8	3	0	0
Sep	74.4	48.7	61.6	88	2	35	22	0	0	0
Oct	62.9	37.5	50.2	85	6	20	23	0	0	11
Nov	45.5	29.5	37.5	56	20	10	18	0	1	17
Dec	40.9	25.6	33.3	54	19	11	31	0	4	28
Year	60.3	38.0	49.2	94	8/16*	-6	1/17	16	24	152

Precipitation, Inches			Number of days				Snow/ice, Inches			
Month	Total Precip	Max Day	Date	>= 0.01"	>= 0.10"	>= 0.50"	>= 1.00"	Total Snow	Max Day	Date
Jan	2.08	0.64	24	9	6	2	0	9.2	4.0	24
Feb	2.00	0.86	4	9	4	1	0	13.3	5.3	8
Mar	4.69	1.25	14	18	9	4	1	3.0	1.5	19
Apr	1.01	0.50	27	7	3	1	0	0.5	0.3	13
May	2.62	0.68	25	14	9	1	0	-	-	-
Jun	3.93	1.04	18	10	8	3	1	-	-	-
Jul	2.89	0.80	1	8	7	2	0	-	-	-
Aug	3.52	1.22	20	11	8	2	1	-	-	-
Sep	3.57	1.83	28	9	6	2	1	-	-	-
Oct	1.43	0.58	26	8	3	2	0	-	-	-
Nov	7.61	2.21	7	19	12	5	2	1.5	1.0	16
Dec	2.12	0.49	29	12	5	0	0	12.0	7.5	29
Year	37.47	2.21	11/7	134	80	25	6	39.5	7.5	12/29
Note: * = also occurred on earlier dates that month										
	Number of days with									
Month	Fog	Sleet	Glaze	Thunder	Hail	Dmg wind				
Jan	2	1	6	0	0	0				
Feb	4	0	2	0	0	0				
Mar	8	4	3	0	0	0				
Apr	5	0	0	1	0	1				
May	5	0	0	6	0	0				
Jun	3	0	0	2	1	1				
Jul	9	0	0	5	0	0				
Aug	8	0	0	8	0	0				
Sep	7	0	0	1	0	0				
Oct	7	0	0	0	0	0				
Nov	5	3	2	1	0	0				
Dec	6	2	2	0	0	0				
Year	69	10	15	24	1	2				