

Weather of 1999

Dry Year with variable temperatures, La Nina replaces El Nino, heavy March snows, active tropics

1999 was a dry year, despite a wet start. At times, drought conditions prevailed, particularly during the summer months. Temperatures were variable, with a cold and record snowy March, but also 1999 had the hottest month ever in July, which had a record 21 days in the 90s. The global weather pattern was dominated by a strong La Nina, after El Nino had dominated during much of 1997-1998.

The extreme drought and warmth of late 1998 ended abruptly. On January 2nd-3rd a major winter storm hit the area. 4 inches of snow fell on the 2nd with temperatures in the teens. Then overnight on the 3rd, heavy sleet and freezing rain fell, another 1.3" of snow/ice and 1.16" of total precipitation. After a high of only 16 on the 5th, the low dipped to a chilly -6 on the 6th. An inch of snow fell on the 7th, then 6 more inches fell on the 8th. Then on the 14th-15th, a nasty ice storm paralyzed much of the Mid-Atlantic with heavy sleet and freezing rain. 4 inches of ice accumulated with 1.53" of melted precipitation. This was undoubtedly the worst ice storm to strike the area since February 1994.

The second half of January was much milder with very little snow and less precipitation. Still, January turned out to be the wettest month of the year with 5.02" of precipitation, along with 16.3" of snow. February was seasonably cold, but also dry with little snow. Only 1.2" of snow fell all month.

Winter made a huge comeback in March. A whopping 29 inches of snow fell, all during the first 13 days, setting a new March record. The month came in like a lion, as a wild cold front on the 3rd brought rain showers that turned to sleet with gusty thunderstorms, and changed to heavy snow overnight on the 4th. Winds gusted 60 to 70 mph, causing widespread damage and white-out blizzard conditions. 3.5" snow fell, with up to a foot at higher elevations. On the 6th, another winter storm dropped 4 inches of snow. The winter blitz continued. A cold high pressure dropped temperatures down to 8 on the 8th, and moisture overrunning a warm front fell as snow and piled up to 8.5 inches on the 9th-10th. Yet another major winter storm hammered the area with 13 inches of heavy wet snow on the 14th. The snow melted down to 1.56" of precipitation, the heaviest precipitation (and snow) day of 1999. The second half of March was much less eventful with only one day of significant rainfall and temperatures warming to 76 on the 31st. Indeed, March went out like a lamb. However, this was still the 5th coolest on record (mean temp was 36.3 F).

April was cool and wet, with many days of precipitation until the final week. 1.46" of rain fell from thunderstorms on the 9th, and another 1.13" fell on the 11th-12th. The high on the 23rd was only 48, after a high of 80 the previous day. Severe thunderstorms passed south of the area on the 23rd and brought large, damaging hail to nearby parts of WV and northern VA.

No measurable rain fell for nearly 2 weeks, but the rain-free streak came to an abrupt end on the evening of May 7th, when a slow-moving severe thunderstorm hammered Allegany county with flooding rains, damaging winds, large hail and severe lightning, which struck our church (the First Presbyterian) in Cumberland. At this station, pea-sized hail and 1.36" of rain fell. 2.13" was recorded at the Police Barracks in less than an hour. Other than this storm, May was quite dry with warm temperatures.

In the midst of another long dry streak, another severe thunderstorm hit on June 2nd, the anniversary of the F4 Frostburg Tornado. This storm didn't spawn any tornadoes, but brought damaging winds and hail to LaVale. 1.29" of rain fell in only a half-hour. This turned out to be the only thunderstorm in June. The rest of the month, like May, was warm and dry.

A strong Bermuda High led to record heat in July. Stifling hot temperatures and humidity gripped the area. 21 days were in the 90s, peaking at 100 on the 31st, and the mean temperature of 77.2 F edged July 1988 as the hottest month ever. It was also very dry with only 1.31" of rain, tying for 5th driest.

The oppressive heat, humidity and dryness continued through much of August. However, much needed heavy rains fell from thunderstorms from the 24th-27th, 2.31" of that on the 24th-25th, pushing precipitation slightly above normal for the first time since April with 3.47". Fall-like temperatures arrived the final week, with the final three mornings all in the 40s.

Active tropics in the Atlantic led to a cool, damp September. The remnants of Dennis brought showers and thunderstorms, totaling 1.92" on the 4th-6th. The remnants of Floyd dumped extremely heavy rains from I-95 eastwards, with up to 15 inches in some parts of the state! We were only on the western

fringe of the storm and had a mere .58" on the 16th. A strong cold front brought high winds and nearly an inch of rain on the 29th. Precipitation was above normal, with below normal temperatures.

October was also cool, with a cold front on the 4th, accompanied by numerous thunderstorms, ushering in the fall season's coldest temperatures thus far. The 7th had the first frost and freeze. Steady rains on the 9th-10th brought 1.33". More thunderstorms passed through on the 13th. However, the second half of October was dry, with only a quarter-inch of rainfall and a dusting of snow on the 22nd.

A cold front on November 2nd brought heavy evening thunderstorms with gusty winds. Snow flurries flew again on the 3rd. Temperatures rebounded to above normal, with a long stretch with very little rainfall, until a slow-moving cold front brought 1.41" of rain on the 25th-26th.

December was also mild and dry. Nearly all of the month's precipitation fell from the 10th-20th, the heaviest event 1.21" on the 13th-14th. The month's coldest temperatures were around Christmas, with a low of 13 on Christmas morning, and several days around the holiday had flurries and light snow showers. However, the year of 1999 finished mild with temperatures reaching the 50s on the final two days.

1999 Weather Statistics

1999 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 \geq 90	Max \leq 32	Min \leq 32
Jan	37.0	20.0	28.5	65	28	-6	6	0	12	29
Feb	41.8	23.1	32.4	60	16	7	22	0	2	26
Mar	47.7	24.8	36.3	76	31	8	8	0	0	29
Apr	62.2	37.3	49.7	80	22	28	26*	0	0	6
May	75.2	47.6	61.4	89	30	37	1	0	0	0
Jun	81.1	57.6	69.3	93	27	43	19	5	0	0
Jul	90.5	64.0	77.2	100	31	51	11	21	0	0
Aug	85.1	59.3	72.2	96	13	44	31	9	0	0
Sep	73.3	50.9	61.9	84	2	37	22	0	0	0
Oct	63.8	37.8	50.8	75	3*	28	28	0	0	10
Nov	53.8	34.1	44.0	69	9	18	16	0	0	15
Dec	42.3	25.8	34.1	57	4	13	25	0	2	25
Year	62.8	40.2	51.5	100	7/31	-6	1/6	35	16	140

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	5.02	0.87	15	16	9	5	0	16.3	6.0	8
Feb	1.71	0.60	7	11	3	1	0	1.2	1.0	24
Mar	4.34	1.56	14	9	7	5	1	29.0	13.0	14
Apr	4.51	1.46	9	15	8	2	2	-	-	
May	2.60	1.36	7	8	5	2	1	-	-	
Jun	2.37	1.29	2	7	4	1	1	-	-	
Jul	1.31	0.63	1	8	3	1	0	-	-	
Aug	3.47	1.49	25	8	5	3	1	-	-	
Sep	4.02	0.94	29	11	8	4	0	-	-	
Oct	2.36	0.81	10	7	5	3	0	T	T	22
Nov	2.46	0.88	2	9	3	3	0	T	T	3
Dec	2.08	0.94	14	9	4	2	0	1.0	0.4	24
Year	36.25	1.56	3/14	118	64	32	6	47.5	13.0	3/14
Note: * = also occurred on earlier dates that month										
Number of days with										
Month	Fog	Sleet	Glaze	Thunder	Hail	Dmg wind				
Jan	6	5	5	0	0	0				
Feb	2	2	0	0	0	0				
Mar	0	2	0	2	0	1				
Apr	4	0	0	4	0	0				
May	3	0	0	3	1	0				
Jun	1	0	0	1	0	1				
Jul	2	0	0	6	0	0				
Aug	2	0	0	5	0	0				
Sep	2	0	0	1	0	0				
Oct	2	0	0	2	0	0				
Nov	2	0	0	1	0	0				
Dec	5	0	0	0	0	0				
Year	31	9	5	25	1	2				