

Weather of 2002

Drought-Busting Rains Finally Arrive, Late May Freeze and Flash Floods, Early Winter Arrival After Warm First 9 Months

The weather of 2002 will be remembered as a transition year from a warm, dry pattern to a cool, wet one. The cold seasons in 2001-02 and 2002-03 were markedly different. The spring and fall seasons brought drought-busting rains to the area. A cold-phase El Nino began to take hold of the weather pattern during the final few months, and winter made an early arrival with a devastating mountain ice storm in October.

January was unusually mild with below normal precipitation and snowfall. 4 inches of snow fell on the 6th and 3 inches fell on the 19th. The month finished very mild with high temperatures in the 60s six of the final nine days. Max temperatures in January averaged 46.5 F, tying it for 3rd warmest on record.

Severe drought conditions continued into February, which yielded a paltry .40 of precipitation, the driest February ever on record, and only 3 inches of snow fell. February was also windy and mild.

Much-needed rain finally fell in March, most of it during the second half of the month. March saw a potpourri of weather. Spring-like temperatures in the 70s arrived the second week, before a strong cold front ripped through with damaging winds on the 9th and 10th that brought down several trees on our street. On St. Patrick's Day, a thunderstorm with sleet and freezing rain was noted. A total of 2.46" of rain fell from the 17th-20th. Temperatures were quite variable the final third of the month, with two more significant rain events on the 26th and 31st, Easter Sunday. 5.11" of rain fell in March, but with only 0.5" of snow. With no measurable snow in April, the winter of 2001-02 was the 4th least snowy season on record.

April was off to a chilly start with several overnight lows in the 20s the first week and snow flurries observed. However, summer made a dramatic appearance by mid-month. The temperature peaked at a hot 90 F on the 17th and remained relatively mild through the remainder of the month. Precipitation was above normal again. 1.43" of rain fell on the 27th-28th. On the evening of the 28th, a deadly F4 tornado struck La Plata, the most powerful tornado to ever hit the state of Maryland.

An active weather pattern continued into May, as did the rollercoaster temperatures. Showers and thunderstorms were numerous throughout the month. On the 14th, a thunderstorm brought a wind gust to 62 mph in Frostburg and sparked a lightning fire in Cumberland. Heavy rains, totaling 1.17", fell overnight on the 17th-18th. A late-season Arctic outbreak brought sub-freezing lows on three consecutive days from the 20th-22nd. However, summer-like temperatures in the 80s immediately followed and persisted through the final week of May. Meanwhile, more severe storms hit the area. On Memorial Day, the 27th, a massive thunderstorm stalled just east of Cumberland, dumping 4 to 5 inches of rain within two hours, ravaging homes and businesses along I-68 and Baltimore Pike with flood waters several feet deep, and causing at least a half-million dollars in damage. Another flash flood hit the Corriganville area on the 29th, closing several roads and flooding over 30 basements. That storm dumped 1.76" of rainfall in only an hour at my station before it moved into Corriganville.

June was a warm month, with temperatures averaging nearly two degrees above normal. The second half was particularly warm and dry. However, June's rainfall was right on par, as heavy rains fell at mid-month. A series of heavy showers and thunderstorms dropped 2.49" of rain on the 13th-14th.

July saw a continuation of the hot, dry conditions. The temperature peaked at 97 F on the 4th. A few days later, smoke from Canadian forest fires drifted south into the area. Scattered thunderstorms brought occasional relief from the heat and humidity, but the heaviest storms repeatedly tracked south of the area, where some stations in the WV Potomac Highlands recorded over 10 inches of monthly rain.

August was hot again, with many hit-or-miss severe storms. The first few days were very hot and humid. On the 2nd, a severe thunderstorm battered the Flintstone area with ping-pong ball sized hail that covered I-68. On the 3rd, hail and damaging winds hit Cumberland, Ridgley and Ft. Ashby, WV. More severe storms moving southeast from PA caused wind damage and flash flooding on the 5th, especially over the center part of the county. Wind damage from thunderstorms was also reported on the east side of Cumberland on the 13th. Another big storm on the evening of the 18th dropped hit our station with 35 mph wind gusts, lightning that near hit our backyard and .99" of rain in an hour. Yet more strong storms passed through overnight on the 23rd-24th. The final few days of the month were cool and cloudy, nearly offsetting the warmth of the rest of the month.

The first three weeks of September were very warm and dry with many highs in the 80s. Only a half-inch of rain fell during this period. However, temperatures cooled off following a cold front on the 22nd. The front produced a strong thunderstorm that dropped 1.44" of rain in an hour. A few days later, the remnants of Hurricane Isadore moved up the east coast and dropped another 1.82" on the 26th and 27th and produced scattered wind damage.

The first week of October was warm and dry. However, a cool, wet weather pattern took over, beginning on the 10th. Four major storm systems passed through, dropping over five inches of rain in a three-week period. The final storm was the heaviest with 1.56" of rain on the 29th-30th. At this station it was only a cold rain, but on nearby ridges, temperatures were below freezing and all of the rain froze on contact. The result was a devastating ice storm that left many forested areas looking like war zones.

The first week of November was cold with lows mainly in the 20s and 30s and highs in the 40s. The second week was the warmest, with temperatures reaching the 60s. The rest of the month saw below normal temperatures again. Most of the month's precipitation fell from three significant weather systems the 5th, 12th and 17th. The season's first measurable snow (1.5") fell on the evening before Thanksgiving.

Winter made quite an appearance in the first week of December. Temperatures were unseasonably cold, and a major winter storm dumped 7" of snow on the 5th. The year's low temperature reached 8 on the 7th. Then back-to-back ice storms hit on the 11th and 13th-14th, and we were treated to a white Christmas after a coastal storm dropped 6.8" of snow from late Christmas Eve into the early morning hours of Christmas Day. Temperatures remained chilly, nearly two degrees below normal, but the year finished on a mild note with the month's high temperature of 50 F recorded on New Year's Eve.

2002 Weather Statistics

2002 Monthly and Annual Climate Summary LaVale, MD, Allegany County Observer Nate Mullins Station Observation Time: Midnight Lat: 39.657780°, Long: - 78.821871°, Elevation 1016'										
Temperature, ° F								Number of days		
Month	Mean Max	Mean Min	Mean Temp	Max Temp	Date	Min Temp	Date	Max ≥ 90	Max ≤ 32	Min ≤ 32
Jan	46.5	27.5	37.0	67	29*	9	2	0	2	24
Feb	48.1	23.7	35.9	67	25	12	14*	0	2	26
Mar	52.9	28.5	40.7	77	15	10	5	0	2	19
Apr	66.3	41.1	53.7	90	17	20	7	1	0	7
May	71.9	46.1	59.0	85	31*	29	4	0	0	4
Jun	82.8	57.9	70.4	91	25*	47	3	4	0	0
Jul	86.2	62.5	74.4	97	4	49	12	13	0	0
Aug	83.8	60.8	72.3	94	2	50	7	7	0	0
Sep	75.2	54.4	64.8	87	3	42	13	0	0	0
Oct	59.5	43.8	51.7	80	3	32	22	0	0	1
Nov	48.7	33.6	41.0	65	11*	23	28	0	0	16
Dec	38.2	24.0	31.1	50	31*	8	7	0	6	27
Year	63.3	42.0	52.7	97	7/4	8	12/7	25	12	124

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	1.88	0.54	24	9	5	1	0	7.5	4.0	6
Feb	0.40	0.11	10	11	1	0	0	3.0	1.5	27
Mar	5.11	1.09	20	13	8	5	1	0.5	0.3	2
Apr	4.08	1.14	28	13	6	4	1	0.0	0.0	-
May	5.39	1.76	29	17	9	3	1	0.0	0.0	-
Jun	3.67	1.58	13	10	6	3	1	0.0	0.0	-
Jul	3.05	0.98	14	9	6	3	0	0.0	0.0	-
Aug	3.43	1.08	5	9	6	3	1	0.0	0.0	-
Sep	3.78	1.44	22	9	4	3	2	0.0	0.0	-
Oct	5.32	1.29	29	14	8	5	1	0.0	0.0	-
Nov	3.06	0.84	12	13	7	3	0	2.5	1.5	26
Dec	3.41	0.84	5	13	7	4	0	15.5	7.0	5
Year	42.58	1.76	5/29	140	73	37	8	29.0	7.0	12/5
Note: * = also occurred on earlier dates that month										
Number of days with										
Month	Fog	Sleet	Glaze	Thunder	Hail	Dmg wind				
Jan	5	4	2	0	0	0				
Feb	2	0	0	0	0	1				
Mar	9	5	1	2	0	2				
Apr	5	1	0	3	0	0				
May	13	0	0	11	0	1				
Jun	12	0	0	4	0	0				
Jul	8	0	0	7	0	0				
Aug	8	0	0	9	0	1				
Sep	8	0	0	2	0	1				
Oct	17	0	0	1	0	0				
Nov	7	0	0	0	0	0				
Dec	5	3	2	0	0	0				
Year	99	13	5	39	0	6				