

Weather of 2004

Wet Year with Another Cold, Snowy Winter, Warm Spring and Fall, September Tropical Storms and Flooding

2004 will be best remembered for the cold, snowy winter and the remnants of Frances, Ivan and Jeanne that ravaged the area with flooding rains in September. It was another very wet year, only the sixth on record with over 50 inches of precipitation, with near-record rainfall in July and September.

The year was off to a very mild start. The 3rd of January felt like spring with a balmy high of 70 F. But Mother Nature had us all fooled. After the first few days, January became very cold, windy and snowy. On the 10th, the high only reached 17 F with a low of 7 F. The second half of January was especially cold. Every day from the 15th on had a low temperature in the teens or single digits, with only two days reaching above freezing. A low of zero was recorded on the 25th.

In the midst of the bone-chilling cold, three consecutive snow storms dropped 16 inches of snow in a five-day period from the 23rd-27th. The first was an Alberta clipper on the night of the 23rd-24th that dropped 4.0" of dry, powdery snow. Later that day and overnight, another winter storm dropped 6 inches of snow. A secondary low trailing the first one clipped the area on the 27th-28th with another 6" of snow. It was the snowiest January since 1996 with 21.3" recorded.

February was off to a chilly start with a low of 4 F on the 1st. Two days later, a low-pressure system over the Ohio Valley brought 10 inches of snow on the 3rd, the heaviest single day snowfall of the season and year. Right on its heels, a major ice storm hammered the area on the 5th-6th, bring 2 inches of precipitation with 1.5" of ice. The remainder of February was seasonably cold with little precipitation.

March was a relatively mild month with below normal precipitation, despite numerous days with precipitation. The month began very mild, preceding a cold front that brought thunderstorms to the area on the 5th-6th and about a half-inch of rain. The 15th was a mild day with a high of 62 F, but the following day (16th) a winter storm dropped 5.2" of snow on the area with a high of only 34 F. The month's high temperature reached a mild 76 F on the 26th.

No April Fools, April began very wet. A cut-off low over the Mid Atlantic spun ample moisture into the area from the northeast. A cold rain accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms totaled 2 inches on the 1st with a storm total from April 1st-2nd of 2.49 inches. Snow fell on nearby ridges, with upwards of a foot in the highest elevations.

The rest of April continued active with variable temperatures that ranged from a chilly 24 F on the 5th to a summer-like 84 F on the 18th and 19th. The most significant rain events occurred on the 12th-13th (2.14") and 25th-26th (0.98"). April finished quite wet with a monthly total of 6.29 inches of rainfall.

May began warm with a high of 80 on the 1st, but following a cold front on the 2nd, the temperature dropped to 35 on the 4th. After that, things warmed up again and remained very warm through the month. 2004 had the warmest May since the record-shattering warm May of 1991 with a mean temperature of 65.5 F and was the 4th warmest May on record. Strong to severe storms produced heavy rain and damaging winds in the area on the 18th and again on the 21st. 1.24" and 0.83" fell from these storms, respectively. Precipitation was near-normal, most of it falling during the second half of the month.

June was relatively quiet with slightly below average temperatures and precipitation. Most of the month's rainfall occurred at the end of the second week, with 1.31" recorded on the 11th. Some minor flooding was reported southwest of the area on the 25th from slow-moving thunderstorms.

Temperatures were remarkably consistent in July. The monthly extreme temperature range was only 33 degrees (88 and 55), a record low. July was quite humid, and combined with a number of frontal systems, showers and thunderstorms dropped heavy rains on numerous occasions, particularly during the final week when 5.44" was recorded. A July daily record 3.10" of rain fell from training northeastward-bound thunderstorms on the 30th. The downpours caused widespread street and stream flooding in the area. More heavy rain fell on the 31st. July was the second wettest on record with a whopping 7.79" of rainfall.

August was the calm between the storms. Temperatures were unremarkable with a general lack of extremes. However, the year's hottest temperature of 94 was recorded on the 4th. Thunderstorms were few and far between, except for the 29th, when a slow-moving cell caused flooding in the Frostburg area.

The names Frances, Ivan and Jeanne summed up September's weather. Virtually all of the month's rainfall came from these three tropical systems. The first two were particularly rambunctious. On

the 8th, Frances deluged the area with 4.36” of rainfall, with a 24-hour storm total of 4.64” on the 8th-9th. Parts of the county, particularly the western portion, were under several feet of flood waters. Frostburg reported 6.26” of rainfall, rivaling Fran’s record 6.33” on September 6th-7th, 1996.

The area received a brief break before the remnants of Ivan, a destructive category 4 hurricane that ravaged the Florida panhandle and other areas around the Gulf coast, moved northeast, taking an almost identical track as Frances. Another 2.86” of rain deluged the area on the 17th-18th, causing major flash flooding again. The National Highway in LaVale turned into a makeshift river, Frostburg was washed out again with 3.83” of rainfall, and parts of Mount Savage were devastated by flooding and mudslides. Meanwhile, much of the rest of the state dealt with a tremendous number of severe storms and tornadoes.

Another tropical storm, Jeanne, dropped 1.20” of rain on the 27th-28th, bringing the month’s rain total to 9.02 inches, the second wettest September on record. In the midst of all of the tropical activity, temperatures were consistently mild, nearly 2.5 degrees above normal, with no sub-40 degree readings.

October brought a much-needed break from the wild tropical weather in September. Surprisingly, October had more days with rain, but nearly all of the rain was light, and only totaled 2.02 inches. Temperatures continued mild with a lack of extremes.

November was mild and wet. Like November 2003, an Indian summer greeted the area early in the month with a high of 78 F on the 3rd. A cold front dropped temperatures somewhat on the 4th, but temperatures remained above normal with little variation. November’s mean temperature of 47.6 F made it the 3rd warmest on record. The month’s heaviest rain (1.07”) fell the day before Thanksgiving.

A strong cold front whipped through the area on the morning of December 1st with fierce winds that blew trees onto houses and cars. The wind was clocked at 62 mph at Frostburg State University. December was another mild month, with a couple of cold snaps. On the 20th, an Arctic front dropped the temperature to 7 F, with a high of only 16 F. The temperature briefly rebounded, before a cold, dry Christmas. The temperature rebounded again to 62 F on the 31st, the high for the month. December was dry with only 1.85” of precipitation and only 0.3” of snowfall.

2004 Weather Statistics

2004 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	32.3	17.2	24.8	70	3	0	25	0	20	27
Feb	40.0	21.6	30.8	56	28	4	1	0	3	28
Mar	52.4	32.5	42.5	76	26	16	23	0	0	16
Apr	62.5	41.6	52.0	84	19*	24	5	0	0	5
May	77.1	53.9	65.5	88	23	35	4	0	0	0
Jun	79.3	56.9	68.1	90	15	47	20	1	0	0
Jul	81.4	62.7	72.0	88	13	55	25*	0	0	0
Aug	80.8	60.8	70.8	94	4	53	6	4	0	0
Sep	74.9	58.1	66.5	82	23*	43	20	0	0	0
Oct	63.2	46.3	54.7	75	30	32	18	0	0	1
Nov	55.4	39.8	47.6	78	3	27	26*	0	0	6
Dec	42.4	28.0	35.2	62	31	7	20	0	7	19
Year	61.8	43.3	52.5	94	8/4	0	1/25	5	30	102

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	3.09	0.67	27	14	10	2	0	21.3	5.5	27
Feb	3.06	1.00	6*	5	3	3	2	12.0	10.0	3
Mar	2.73	0.70	16	16	9	1	0	5.2	5.2	16
Apr	6.29	2.00	1	16	9	4	2	T	T	4
May	4.31	1.24	18	18	6	3	1	0.0	-	-
Jun	3.21	1.31	11	13	6	2	1	0.0	-	-
Jul	7.79	3.10	30	12	8	5	2	0.0	-	-
Aug	2.23	0.79	12	7	5	2	0	0.0	-	-
Sep	9.02	4.36	8	9	7	3	2	0.0	-	-
Oct	2.02	0.42	24	13	8	0	0	0.0	-	-
Nov	4.44	1.07	24	13	10	4	1	0.0	-	-
Dec	1.85	0.47	9	6	6	0	0	0.3	0.2	14
Year	50.04	4.36	9/8	142	87	29	11	38.8	10.0	2/3
Note: * = also occurred on earlier dates that month										
Number of days with										
Month	Fog	Sleet	Glaze	Thunder	Hail	Dmg wind				
Jan	2	3	1	0	0	0				
Feb	1	1	3	0	0	0				
Mar	2	1	0	2	0	0				
Apr	3	0	0	5	0	0				
May	4	0	0	8	0	0				
Jun	9	0	0	4	0	0				
Jul	16	0	0	7	0	0				
Aug	11	0	0	6	0	0				
Sep	13	0	0	0	0	1				
Oct	15	0	0	1	0	0				
Nov	8	0	0	0	0	0				
Dec	3	0	0	0	0	1				
Year	87	5	4	33	0	2				