

Weather of 2009

El Nino Returns, Arctic Cold, Late April Record Heat, Cool July with Oldtown Tornado, Another December Winter Blitz

2009's weather will be well remembered for many things: a return of El Nino, the most intense Arctic outbreak in 15 years, record late April heat, flooding rains in May and June, a freak tornado in Oldtown on July 29th, a record cold snap in mid-October and yet another December with crippling snow and ice storms.

The first major weather system of 2009 struck the area on January 6-7, bringing heavy rain and ice. A half-inch of sleet accumulated, along with heavy glaze and 1.38" of total storm precipitation. After a mild ice storm on the 10th and an Alberta Clipper on the 15th that brought 2.5" of fluffy snow, a brief but intense Arctic outbreak brought the oldest temperatures since 1994, with a low of -8 on the 17th. Another winter storm brought snow, sleet and freezing rain from the 26th-28th, with 5" of snow and ice.

February was mild but with variable temperatures. After a record high of 69 on the 11th, an unusually strong cold front ripped through the area, bringing ferocious winds that toppled trees, damaged buildings and caused the most widespread power outages in years. Winds on the 12th were clocked at 67 mph at the Cumberland airport. On the evening of the 18th, a thunderstorm with pea-sized hail was noted.

March began cold and wintry. The northwest fringes of a Nor' Easter dropped 2.5" of snow early on the 1st. A record low of 7 was recorded on the 3rd. However, temperatures made a spectacular rebound into the 70s on the 6th-8th. A low of 63 on the 8th matched an all-time March record high. The remainder of the month was mild and very dry, with a series of light rain events finally arriving during the final week.

A series of weather systems led to above normal precipitation in April. The season's last snow flakes fell on the 7th, when a chilly high of 39 was recorded. However, an unprecedented late-April heat wave brought 4 consecutive record highs in the 90s from the 25th-28th. A high of 96 on the 27th set a new all-time record high for the month of April and, unbelievably, ended up as the high for the entire year.

May began cool and very wet. Nearly 4.5 inches of rain fell in the first week. 2.56" of rain fell on the 4th, causing river flooding on the North Branch Potomac. A cold snap brought a record low of 34 on the 19th along with frost. However, temperatures were in the 80s from the 21st-25th. Scattered thunderstorms rumbled through the area late in the month, most notably on the 23rd, when a severe, stationary thunderstorm wreaked havoc on an outdoor camping event at Potomac Park, where high winds blew over nearly every tent. Quarter-sized hail and flash flooding was reported in Wiley Ford, WV, and an automated gauge just south of Cumberland recorded 2.52" of rain in just over an hour. The storm was very localized, however, and only dropped 0.36" of rain on this station.

Like May, June also began cool and wet. Over 2" of rain fell from the 2nd-5th, with highs only in the 50s and heavy rains on the 4th-5th. Severe thunderstorms clipped the extreme NE and SW ends of the county on the 9th. Quarter-sized hail was reported in the McCoolle/Keyser area along the WV border. On the evening of the 17th, a cluster of nasty thunderstorms moved SE after ravaging the Pittsburgh, PA area, dumping 1.96" of rain and causing wind damage and flash flooding in the SW part of the county, where 2-4 inches of rain fell. More strong to severe thunderstorms rumbled southeast through the area on the 20th.

July had near-record coolness, and despite a stretch of over two weeks without measurable rainfall, above normal precipitation, with some notable thunderstorms, particularly during the second half. On the afternoon of the 1st, a storm dropped .74" of rain in a half-hour and brought wind gusts over 40 mph. No rain fell until the 17th, when another round of storms hit the area. A slow-moving heavy thunderstorm dumped 1.37" of rain in only one hour on the afternoon of the 20th.

On the afternoon of July 29th, a surprise EF1 tornado hit the northwest side of Oldtown, the first confirmed tornado in Allegany County since the 1998 Frostburg Tornado. The twister heavily damaged a barn and several residences, snapped poles and ripped trees to shreds, but fortunately no one was hurt. The tornado moved northeast, briefly touching down again in the Belle Grove area about 40 minutes later. Another front on the heels of the 29th storm brought another 1.26" of rain on the 31st, pushing precipitation over 5 inches for the 3rd consecutive month. Meanwhile, 2009 had the coolest July average maximum temperature ever, with a mean max of 78.6 F. Overall, it was the 4th coolest July on record with a mean temperature of 69.6 F. Temperatures failed to reach 90 in July for only the 4th time in recent records.

August was much warmer and drier. Temperatures reached the upper 80s to low 90s on several occasions, with some overnight lows in the mid 70s. A thunderstorm on the 12th dropped over an inch of

rain in an hour. September continued quiet and dry, with consistent and above normal temperatures again. Most of the month's rain fell in the final week, with over an inch (1.06") recorded on the 26th.

October was very active, with many weather systems affecting the area. On the 7th, a cold front brought locally damaging winds. A week later, an abnormally deep trough and back-to-back Nor' Easters pummeled the Mid-Atlantic. About 1.5" of cold rain fell, with measurable snows to our north and east and at higher elevations, especially over central PA, where 4 to 9 inches of heavy, wet snow fell. Five consecutive days, from the 14th-18th, had record cold high temperatures. A high of 38 on the 16th set a record for the earliest 30-degree day ever in a cold season.

After the season's first frost and freeze on the 19th, temperatures quickly rebounded into the 70s on the 21st and 22nd. Heavy rains, totaling 2.27", fell on the 23rd and 24th ahead of a cold front. Another system brought nearly an inch of rain on the 27th-28th, bringing the month's precipitation total to 5.25 inches. Meanwhile, October's mean maximum temperature of 57.9 F ranked 2nd coolest on record.

An inexplicably mild, dry pattern suddenly dominated in November. The only three sub-freezing temperatures of the month all occurred within the first week. Only one day had measurable rainfall until the 19th, when over an inch of rain fell. November's mean temperature of 47.4 F ranked 4th warmest ever.

For the third consecutive year, December brought relentless cold, wind, snow and ice. For the 4th in the past 8 years, the season's first significant (and in this case, first measurable) snow, 5.0", fell on Dec. 5th. Then on the 8th-9th, a potent system raced in from the Midwest, dumping 4" of snow/ice and 2.26" of precipitation in only 12 hours. An ice storm brought up to a quarter-inch of glaze at higher elevations on the 13th. Then on the 18th-19th, the strongest Nor' Easter since the massive February 2003 storm crippled the Mid-Atlantic. 16.5" of snow fell here, the second heaviest December snow storm on record. Another winter storm brought sleet and freezing rain on Christmas, our first White Christmas since 2002. The final significant storm occurred the morning of New Year's Eve, when a fast-moving system brought 2 more inches of snow. Temperatures were below normal throughout December, with a lack of extremes. December's 6.31" of precipitation set a new monthly record, with 28.3" of snow ranking it 2nd snowiest.

2009 Weather Statistics

2009 Monthly and Annual Climate Summary LaVale, MD, Allegany County Observer Scott Lohr (Data Compiled by 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	31.5	19.5	25.5	56	23	-8	17	0	20	31
Feb	41.9	25.1	33.5	69	11	7	5	0	6	20
Mar	52.2	34.1	43.1	74	6	7	3	0	2	14
Apr	62.6	42.2	52.4	96	27	31	9	4	0	4
May	69.1	51.2	60.1	84	23	34	19	0	0	0
Jun	77.4	59.7	68.6	93	25	44	1	3	0	0
Jul	78.6	60.5	69.6	89	16	52	14	0	0	0
Aug	82.7	64.2	73.4	91	10	51	31	4	0	0
Sep	73.1	56.4	64.7	87	23	47	2	0	0	0
Oct	57.9	43.2	50.6	74	22	30	19	0	0	1
Nov	55.0	39.9	47.4	72	8	27	7	0	0	3
Dec	36.5	25.4	31.0	53	1	10	24	0	7	26
Year	59.9	43.5	51.7	96	4/27	-8	1/17	11	35	99

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	2.78	0.94	7	10	7	2	0	10.1	4.5	27
Feb	1.02	0.46	18	9	2	0	0	1.8	0.7	23
Mar	1.64	0.38	26	8	7	0	0	2.5	2.5	1
Apr	4.36	1.21	20	13	9	3	1	0.1	0.1	7
May	5.76	2.56	4	18	10	3	1	-	-	-
Jun	5.78	1.96	17	12	9	5	2	-	-	-
Jul	5.18	1.37	20	9	7	5	2	-	-	-
Aug	2.12	1.26	12	6	5	1	1	-	-	-
Sep	2.17	1.06	26	10	6	1	1	-	-	-
Oct	5.25	1.14	23	13	11	4	2	-	-	-
Nov	1.54	1.03	19	6	3	1	1	T	T	27
Dec	6.31	1.76	9	11	10	4	2	28.3	16.5	19
Year	43.91	2.56	5/4	125	86	29	13	42.8	16.5	12/19
Note: * = also occurred on earlier dates that month										
Number of days with										
Month	Fog	Sleet	Glaze	Thunder	Hail	Dmg wind				
Jan	1	5	4	0	0	0				
Feb	1	1	0	1	1	2				
Mar	4	0	0	0	0	0				
Apr	6	0	0	1	0	0				
May	5	0	0	3	0	0				
Jun	5	0	0	6	0	0				
Jul	8	0	0	4	0	1				
Aug	8	0	0	4	0	0				
Sep	5	0	0	1	0	0				
Oct	5	0	0	0	0	1				
Nov	1	0	0	0	0	0				
Dec	4	3	3	0	0	0				
Year	53	9	7	20	1	4				