

The Richmond International Airport Had Only One of Four Traces of Snow in the Month of October and This Was The Earliest

The record early snowstorm of October 10, 1979--

Washington's earliest measurable snowfall occurred on October 10, 1979. National Airport reported only 0.3 inches of snow; however, much heavier snow fell to the West of Washington causing significant tree damage in the mountains of Virginia. The tree damage was especially severe because the trees had not yet lost their leaves, allowing huge amounts of snow to accumulate on the branches. The storm began on October 9th when a low- pressure area moved east through New York state and Massachusetts. Washington was in the warm sector of the storm and temperatures topped out in the low '70's before the trailing cold front swept through during the late afternoon. During the nighttime hours, unseasonably cold air surged down the East Coast. As cold air invaded the D.C. area, a second storm center took shape over the Carolinas. A chilly rain broke out that evening and continued all night. By midnight, the temperature had fallen to 50 degrees F. The relentless drop of the Mercury continued during the pre-dawn hours and many people in the northern and western suburbs awoke to see snow falling. During the early morning a burst of 1 - 3 inches of snow fell in central and northern Montgomery County and a coating of snow accumulated in Fairfax and lower Montgomery County. The precipitation tapers off for all in all sections between 7 and 9 A.M. but by 10:00 A.M. in New band of heavy snow broke out this time centering its fury on the southern half of the metropolitan area. Huge snowflakes were accompanied by lightning and thunder. By noon, the worst was over and the snow it tapered off. During the second burst when the 3 inches of snow fell in the central and southern parts of the region. A snowfall maximum of 3.0 inches was centered in Fairfax County.

Aside from the October 10, 1979 storm, there have been only two measurable October snows on record. Those took place October 19, 1940 and October 30, 1925. (p. 86-87 Washington Weather Book 2002 by Ambrose, Henry, Weiss)

