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Warming Trend Continues Year May Set Record for High Temperatures

by Paul Hodge
 The Washington Post (Dec. 3, 1975)

Bolstered by the warmest November on record, the Washington area appears headed for its third record or near-record warm year in a row, according to the National Weather Service.

Temperatures last month averaged 54.4 degrees, making it the warmest November since federal weathermen began keeping records here in 1871. It was 6.4 degrees above "normal" for November — "normal" for the Weather Service means temperature averages over the past 30 years.

Even if temperatures are only normal this month, 1975 will go down in weather books as the second warmest year since 1871, eclipsing overheated 1973 as the record holder.

Actually, the Weather Service's long-range 30-day (December) and 90-day (winter) forecasts predict abnormally warm weather here. The Washington area has already had four unusually warm winters in a row, and the East Coast in general has experienced a

warming trend since 1970 and the colder-than-normal 1960s.






While 1975 has set few records so far, Washington's weather has been wetter than normal and its air dirtier than normal. September's 12.36 inches of rain is a record and rainfall here already is 10.6 inches above normal in the first 11 months.

In air pollution the area recorded the single worst day (Aug. 1) since the Council of Governments began testing the air in 1970, and the second-longest spell of air pollution (17 days).

The record warm weather last month helped conserve gas and oil heating fuel supplies, although Washington Gas Light Co. officials said yesterday it also has had a "significant impact on our revenues," since so few families have had to turn up their thermostats.

The gas company cut off gas supplies to its 260 "interruptible" customers about half of last winter and had told them this winter they can expect more gas for

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heating but how much more the company doesn't know, according to Charles Krautler, spokesman for the company.

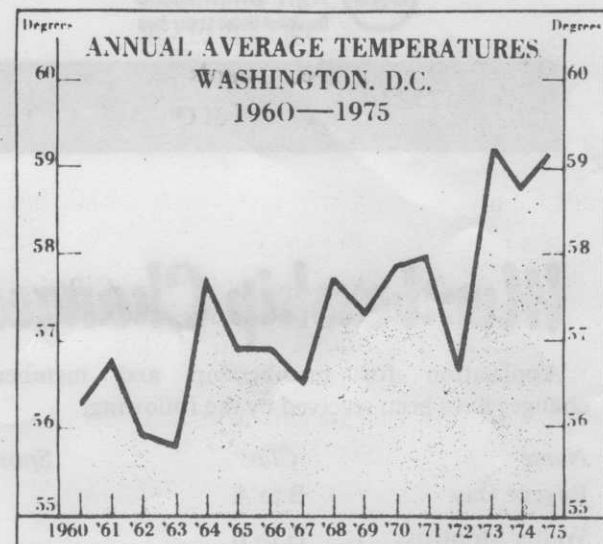
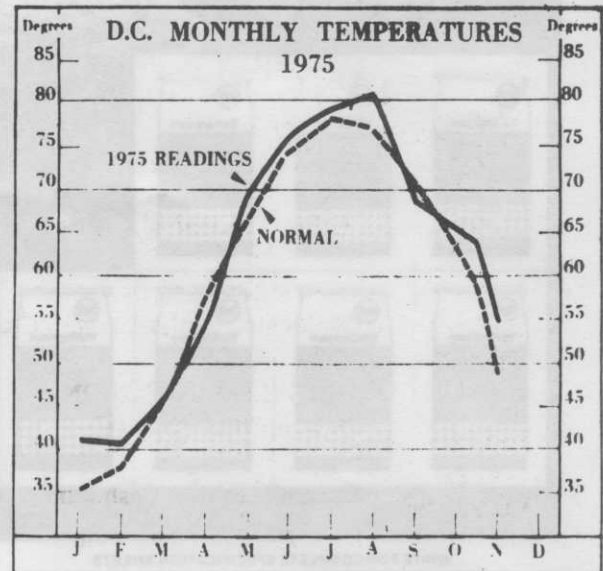
The "interruptibles" are large apartments, office buildings, universities and hospitals here whose heating plants use natural gas but can be switched to burn more expensive heating oil.

While 1975 temperatures have been unusually warm on the average, the weather has been erratic. September and April were both colder than normal, September filled with heavy rain and hail storms, most of it by-products of Hurricane Eloise. April was unusually windy, with almost a week of nonstop high winds and several days with winds gusting to 50 and 60 miles an hour.

The unseasonably warm weather during the past five years has been due largely to fluctuations in the major air currents that prescribe weather for the mid-Atlantic states, according to Robert Dickson, deputy chief of the Weather Service's long-range prediction group.

"We've had an abnormally strong Bermuda High," the clockwise air circulation that brings Gulf Stream weather here, "and stronger than normal westerly winds across the U.S., which have blocked the usual polar air that comes down on us from Canada," Dickson said.

Why this is occurring, however, is not that easy to explain and even meteorologists disagree about the causes, Dickson said.



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