

Thursday, 4 April 2024

Cold temperatures, widespread rainfall and possible flooding over parts of South Africa this weekend into early next week (6 to 9 April 2024)

Following recent prolonged heatwaves and below-average rainfall over much of South Africa's interior, cooler and unsettled weather conditions are expected across many regions over the coming days. An intense low-pressure system, known as a cut-off low, is forecasted to bring widespread showers and thundershowers to many parts of the country this weekend into early next week (6 to 9 April). Cut-off lows are large weather systems notorious for causing widespread flooding, as evidenced by events such as the well-known KwaZulu-Natal flooding in 2022 and the Laingsburg flooding in 1981. These weather systems can also bring damaging winds, severe thunderstorms, and even snow, depending on the season in which they develop. Cut-off lows are most frequent during the Autumn and Spring seasons, with the highest frequency during the month of April.

Tropical moisture has been transported from our neighbouring countries to the central and eastern interior of South Africa since yesterday (Wednesday, 3 April). This will result in scattered rainfall to continue today (Thursday) and Friday, which will spread to the southern parts of the Western Cape and parts of the Eastern Cape tonight into Friday. Cooler temperatures are forecasted for the southern and eastern parts of the country from tomorrow (Friday).

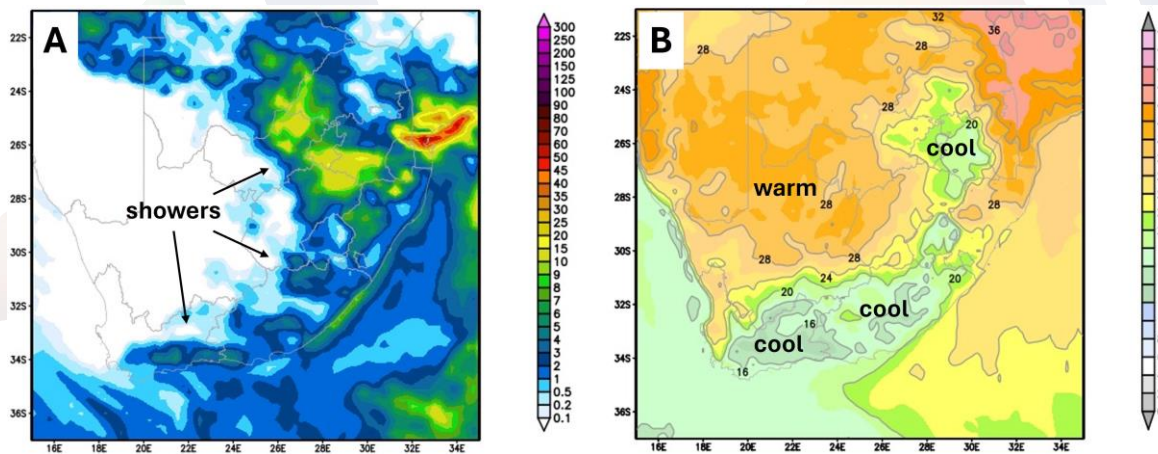


Figure 1: 24-hour rainfall accumulation (A) and maximum temperatures (B) according to the Global Forecast System (GFS) for Friday 05 April 2024. Source: GFS 2024

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Following this, an intense cut-off low is expected to develop along the west coast of the country from Saturday afternoon. It will then move over the Northern Cape on Sunday, reach the interior of the Western Cape on Monday, and exit along the southern coast of the Western Cape on Tuesday (9 April). Widespread showers and thundershowers are expected to develop over much of the country during Saturday and will continue until at least Tuesday whereafter calm and clear weather conditions will return to many areas.

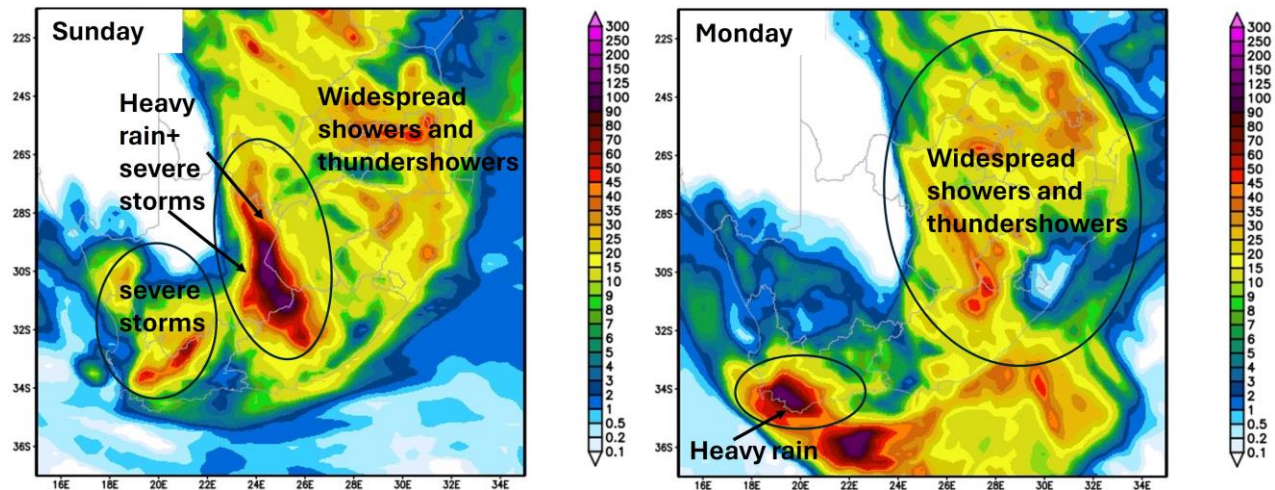


Figure 2: 24-hour rainfall accumulation for Sunday, 7 April (left) and Monday, 8 April (right) according to the Global Forecast System (GFS). Widespread showers and thundershowers are expected across most parts of the country, with heavy rainfall and severe thunderstorms possible in some areas. Source: GFS 2024

Persistent showers and thundershowers may lead to flooding over the central and eastern parts of the country, particularly from Sunday into Monday, while severe thunderstorms with heavy rainfall and large amounts of small hail are possible over the western interior on Sunday into Monday. There is also an indication of heavy rainfall over parts of the Overberg and south-west coast of the Western Cape on Monday into Tuesday as the cut-off low exits along the southern coast of the Western Cape. The Cape south-west coast may also experience a strong to gale force south-easterly wind, which could affect coastal marine routines and operations.

Cool to cold maximum temperatures are also expected across parts of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal from Saturday, which will spread to the remainder of the country on Sunday into Monday. Day-time temperatures are expected to be in the high teens and low twenties across most parts and will even go down to the low teens over the high-lying areas of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

There remains uncertainty among Numeric Weather Prediction (NWP) models regarding the intensity and future movement of the system. This uncertainty could lead to changes in rainfall amounts and distribution and the South African Weather Service will therefore provide regular updates to the public and disaster management on expected weather conditions and potential Impact-Based warnings. It is strongly advised that the public take necessary precautions during this weekend and early next week. This includes avoiding crossing flooded roads, bridges, and swollen streams.

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor any further developments relating to this weather system and will issue subsequent updates as required. Furthermore, the public is urged and encouraged to regularly follow weather forecasts on television and radio. Updated information in this

regard will regularly be available at www.weathersa.co.za as well as via the SA Weather Service X account @SAWeatherServic

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