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Monday, 31 May 2021

Wet and very cold week ahead for South Africa

A week of very cold temperatures is expected across the majority of South Africa from today (Monday), lasting well into the coming weekend. The cold temperatures follow in the wake of a cold front that moved over the eastern parts of the country on Sunday evening, sustained by the development of a cut-off low pressure system over the south-eastern parts of the country.

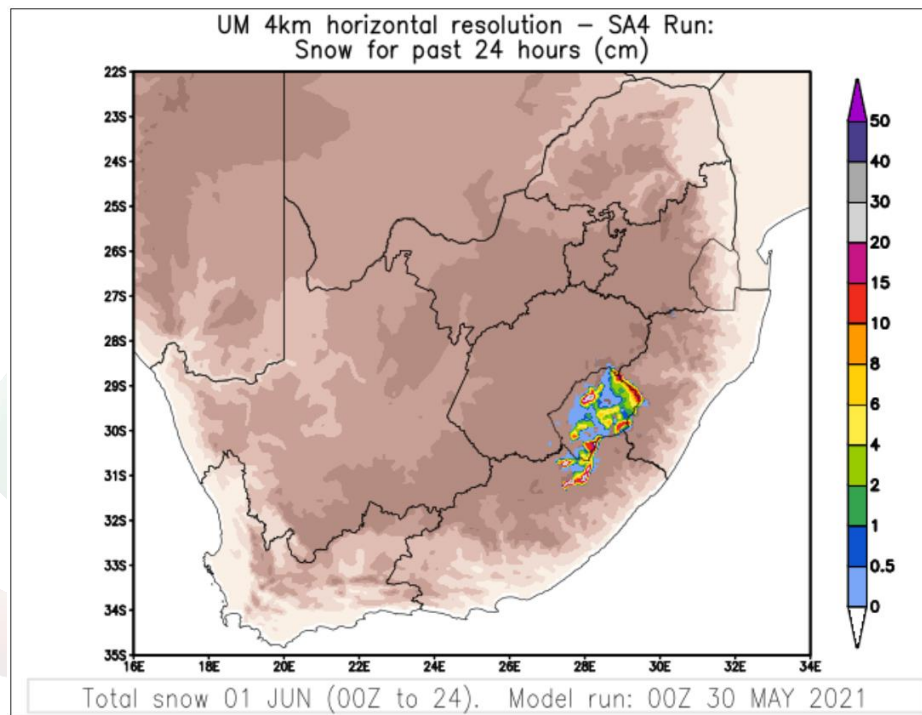


Figure 1: 24 hour accumulated snowfall for 1st of June 2021. Source: South African Weather Service (Unified Model)

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The cut-off low pressure system will be responsible for the majority of adverse weather expected over the next three days. This includes **snowfall accumulation** of between 5 to 15 cm over Lesotho and the southern Drakensberg mountains in the Eastern Cape (Figure 1), **rainfall of a disruptive nature** along the Wild Coast and north eastern KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 2) as well as **wet conditions accompanied by very cold temperatures** over the high lying areas of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.

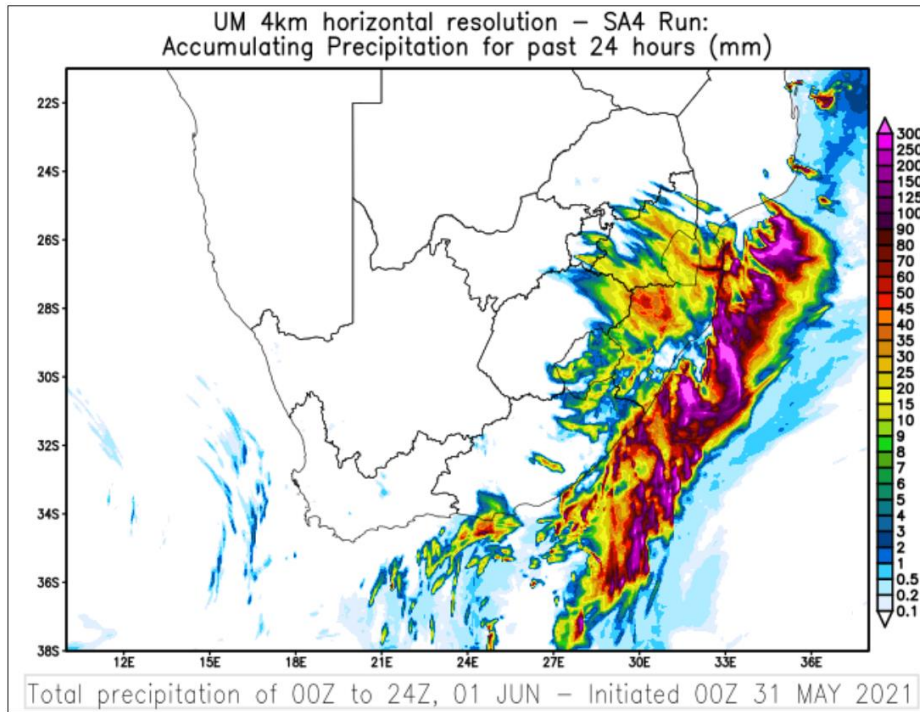


Figure 2: 24 hour accumulated rainfall for the 1st of June 2021, Source: South African Weather Service (Unified Model)

Eastern Cape impacts:

Showers and thundershowers are expected over the southern and eastern parts of the Eastern Cape province as the high-pressure system ridges in, combined with the influence of the upper air cut-off low located over eastern parts of the country. Heavy rain over the Eastern Cape is expected to result in **localised flooding of roads and settlements** along the Wild coast and adjacent interior from 01 June 2021 into 02 June 2021. Moreover, cold conditions are expected over Eastern Cape, with very cold conditions over the north eastern high ground of the southern Drakensberg, where **disruptive snowfalls** are expected from tomorrow morning (1 June 2021) into Wednesday morning (2 June 2021). This could result in **major roads and mountain passes being closed** as well as **loss of livestock** and access to some remote communities being interrupted due to snowfall or icy roads.

Free State impacts:

Small stock farmers and the public of the eastern Free State are advised to **provide shelter for their animals** due the expected wet, windy, and very cold conditions in the form of showers and thundershowers from tonight. There is also a possibility of small hail and graupel which can lead to **slippery roads** mainly from late Tuesday morning into the evening. **Light snowfalls** are expected over the high-lying areas of Clarens, Fouriesburg, Ficksburg and Memel which can cause slippery road conditions, especially on the R712, and should the accumulated snowfall reach 1 cm or more, this section of road could be closed. Therefore, **the public is advised to avoid these areas and to rather stay home** and indoors if possible. **Heavier snowfalls** may occur over Phuthaditjhaba, where the community is advised to take the necessary precautions to stay warm and dry in the safest manner possible.

KwaZulu Natal impacts:

Over the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), temperatures are expected to drop significantly tomorrow, especially over the extreme western parts (in the Harry Gwala, uMgungundlovu and uThukela district municipalities). Similar to the Eastern Cape and Free State impacts, snowfall is likely in the KZN Drakensberg Mountains tomorrow into Wednesday, with **significant snowfall** (10 – 15 cm) expected over the Lesotho region. Consequently, the Sani pass may be temporarily closed due to snowfall. There is also a possibility of **disruptive rain** over the north-eastern parts of KZN tomorrow afternoon into evening, leading to possible **localised flooding** of susceptible formal/informal settlements or roads, **minor vehicle accidents** due to unsafe driving conditions as well as **localised damage to mud-based houses**. Areas over uMkhanyakude, eastern Zululand and eastern King Cetshwayo district municipalities are likely to be particularly affected.

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 are 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 Twitter account @SAWeatherServic

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