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Friday, 12 May 2023

Heavy rainfall and flooding for parts of Eastern Cape this weekend

The cold front made landfall yesterday, moving further over the interior of Western and Eastern Cape overnight and introducing cloudy and cold conditions to these provinces. Rainfall is already occurring over the southern parts of the country, with cold, rainy conditions expected to persist over the weekend, as these conditions migrate further northward and eastwards over southern Africa. Whilst snowfalls are expected over the mountainous regions of all three of the Cape provinces, the falls of snow are mostly expected to be relatively light and of a patchy, non-disruptive nature.

The most important and significant aspect regarding the weather for this weekend, is that numeric weather prediction models suggest that significantly heavy rainfall, of the order of 100 to 200 mm is likely to occur over the eastern parts of Eastern Cape on Saturday, 13 May, specifically between East London and Port St Johns, including the adjacent interior regions. Moreover, further rainfall is expected to persist over this region on Sunday, 14 May (refer Figure 1) when significant rainfall spreads over parts of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Persistent rainfall of this magnitude, enhanced by sustained cool, moist onshore flow against the coastal topography, is highly likely to lead to localised urban and river flooding as well as damage to infrastructure.

Given the expectation of an extended spell of cold, wet weather as well as the possibility of snowfalls over mountainous parts of Western, Northern and Eastern Cape, farmers of small stock are advised to move animals to dry shelters at lower elevations. Moreover, only experienced, well-prepared hikers and climbers should venture into the mountains and hiking trails of Western and Eastern Cape as well as KZN (especially the Drakensberg region) this weekend. The risk of hypothermia in mountainous terrain, especially if lost, injured or ill-prepared could prove to be life-threatening.

Daytime temperatures for the weekend are expected to be of the order of 12 to 16°C over the interior of the Cape provinces on Friday, with cold, showery conditions spreading into the Free State, North West, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KZN during the weekend.

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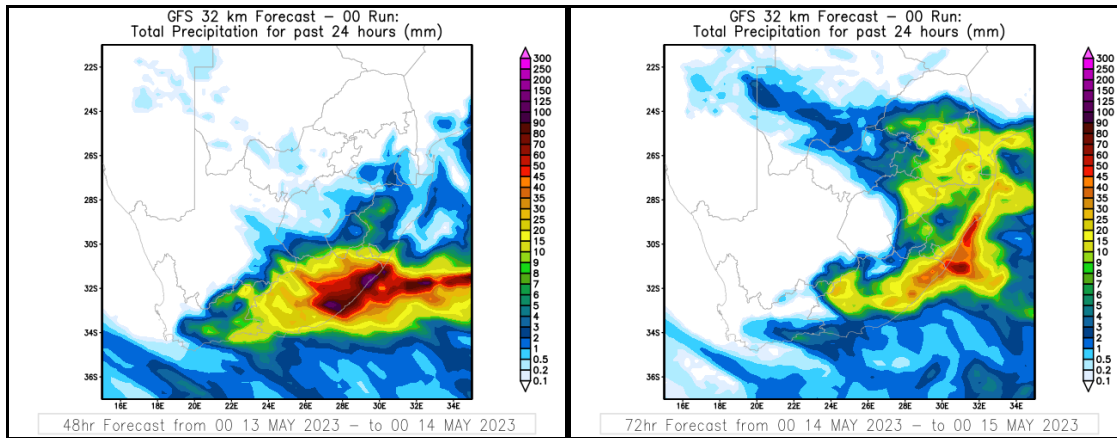


Figure 1: Numerically modelled 24-hour rainfall in mm, based on the GFS model, valid for Saturday, 13 May 2023 (at left) together with the corresponding image valid for Sunday, 14 May 2023 (at right). Note the extremely high rainfall values, exceeding 100mm/day suggested for the eastern parts of Eastern Cape on Saturday, with significant rainfall persisting on Sunday. Source: GFS deterministic NWP model.

Furthermore, the public are urged and encouraged to regularly follow weather forecasts on television, radio as well as social media platforms. 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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