

Friday, 26 May 2023

Late Autumn cut-off low to bring widespread showers and thundershowers to central, southern and western parts of South Africa from Sunday

Widespread thundershowers are expected over parts of the Free State, Northern and Eastern Cape from Sunday, 28 May 2023, spreading to the Western Cape on Monday, where there is a possibility of heavy rainfall that may lead to flash flooding in places. This will be due to a steep upper-air system that is expected to cut off from the main westerly flow during the weekend, developing into a cut-off low pressure system along the west coast of the country by Sunday.

Cut-off lows are fickle and, at times, difficult to predict. Although the latest numerical weather prediction models are not agreeing with the intensity, position and expected evolution of the cut-off low, similar weather systems in the past had resulted in sporadic intense rainfall, which led to flooding events. Given the recent rainfall and increased soil moisture over parts of the Western and Eastern Cape, sporadic heavy rainfall may enhance the possibility of flooding. It is therefore important that the public regularly follow weather warnings and updated weather forecasts that may be issued over the weekend.

Showers and thundershowers are expected to start on Sunday over the Free State, Lesotho, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape, spreading to the Western Cape on Monday, and this is expected to persist over the aforementioned areas until Wednesday. Heavy rainfall may develop over parts of the Cape Winelands and Overberg of the Western Cape (in the form of thundershowers) on Monday afternoon, with the potential for flash flooding. Moreover, daytime temperatures are expected to remain cold (between 10°C and 16°C) over the interior of the Cape provinces and parts of the Free State from Monday to Wednesday but may be below 10°C over the southern parts of the Namakwa District and northern interior of the Western Cape. Small stock farmers are advised that cold, wet and windy weather may pose a threat to livestock, especially over the interior of the Cape provinces during this period.

Strong to near gale force winds are expected to occur along the Western Cape coast between Saldanha Bay and Plettenberg Bay on Monday associated with very rough sea conditions of 4.5 to 5.0 m, which will lead to difficulty in navigation at sea and may cause problems for small marine vessels.

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On Wednesday, the tail of the cut-off low (the so-called scorpion’s tail) will continue to result in rainfall over the Western Cape, while rainfall and cooler temperatures will spread to KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

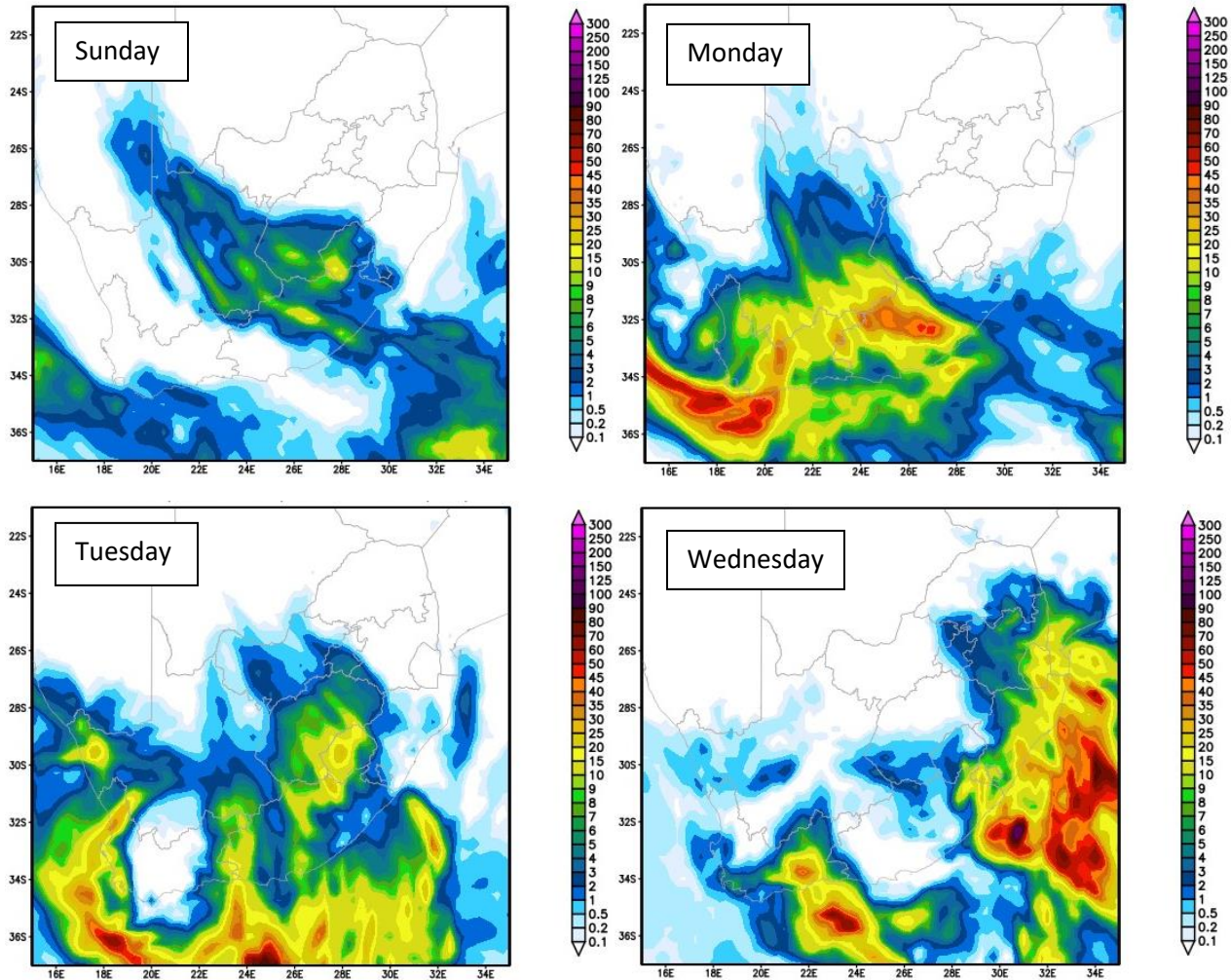


Figure 1: Numerically modelled 24-hour rainfall in mm, based on the GFS model, valid for Sunday and Monday, 28 to 29 May 2023 (top) and Tuesday and Wednesday, 30 and 31 May (bottom). Source: GFS deterministic NWP model.

Furthermore, members of 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

Compiled by Wayne Venter.

Edited by Ezekiel Sebegu.

Approved by Tshepo Ngobeni, Senior Manager DRR

For technical and weather enquiries:

National Forecasting Centre: Tel: 012 367 6041

Media enquiries: Ms Hannelee Doubell: Manager, Communications; Tel: (012) 367 6104; Cell: 072 222 6305; E-mail: hannelee.doubell@weathersa.co.za

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