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Tuesday, 18 July 2023

Further wintry weather for the latter half of this week

Following close on the heels of the extreme winter weather system which brought widespread snow and bitter cold a week ago, yet another cut-off low is expected to introduce a dramatic drop in temperature, with snow in places, for the southern half of the country.

In the days ahead, a cut-off low is expected to develop over the southern interior of South Africa. This system will result in a sudden and widespread lowering of maximum temperatures, especially over the Cape provinces, as early as tomorrow, Wednesday, 19 July 2023. Apart from the impact of widespread, bitterly cold and showery conditions setting in over the Cape provinces, the South Africa Weather Service (SAWS) expects snowfalls to occur over the higher mountains of the Cape provinces tomorrow, spreading to include the Drakensberg Mountain peaks of Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal on Thursday (as indicated in Figure 1, below).

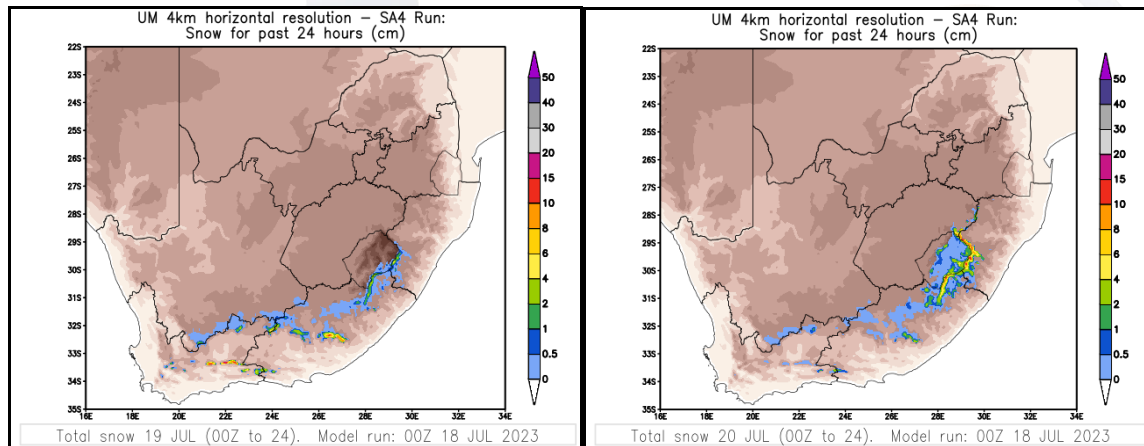


Figure 1: Numeric model (NWP) predictions of snow depth (cm) for Wednesday 19 July (at left) and Thursday 20 July 2023 (at right) Source: Unified Model (UM)

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As the cut-off low develops further and intensifies during the week, cold weather, accompanied by overcast, rainy conditions, can be expected to set in over parts of the Northern Cape, North-West, Gauteng, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Mpumalanga (Figure 2). This weather will persist during Friday, when heavier falls can be expected over the western and central parts of the above-mentioned provinces. Persistent rainfall is therefore likely to lead to localised flooding and minor disruptions of road traffic. Moreover, there is also the possibility of a few thunderstorms developing, some of which may become severe. Large amounts of small hail as well as strong, gusty surface winds may also contribute to icy roads and hazardous driving conditions. Motorists encountering such conditions are advised to reduce speed and to observe safe following distances in traffic.

By Saturday, much of the rainfall will be in the process of shifting to the eastern and north-eastern provinces. The majority of the inclement weather is expected to clear by Sunday.

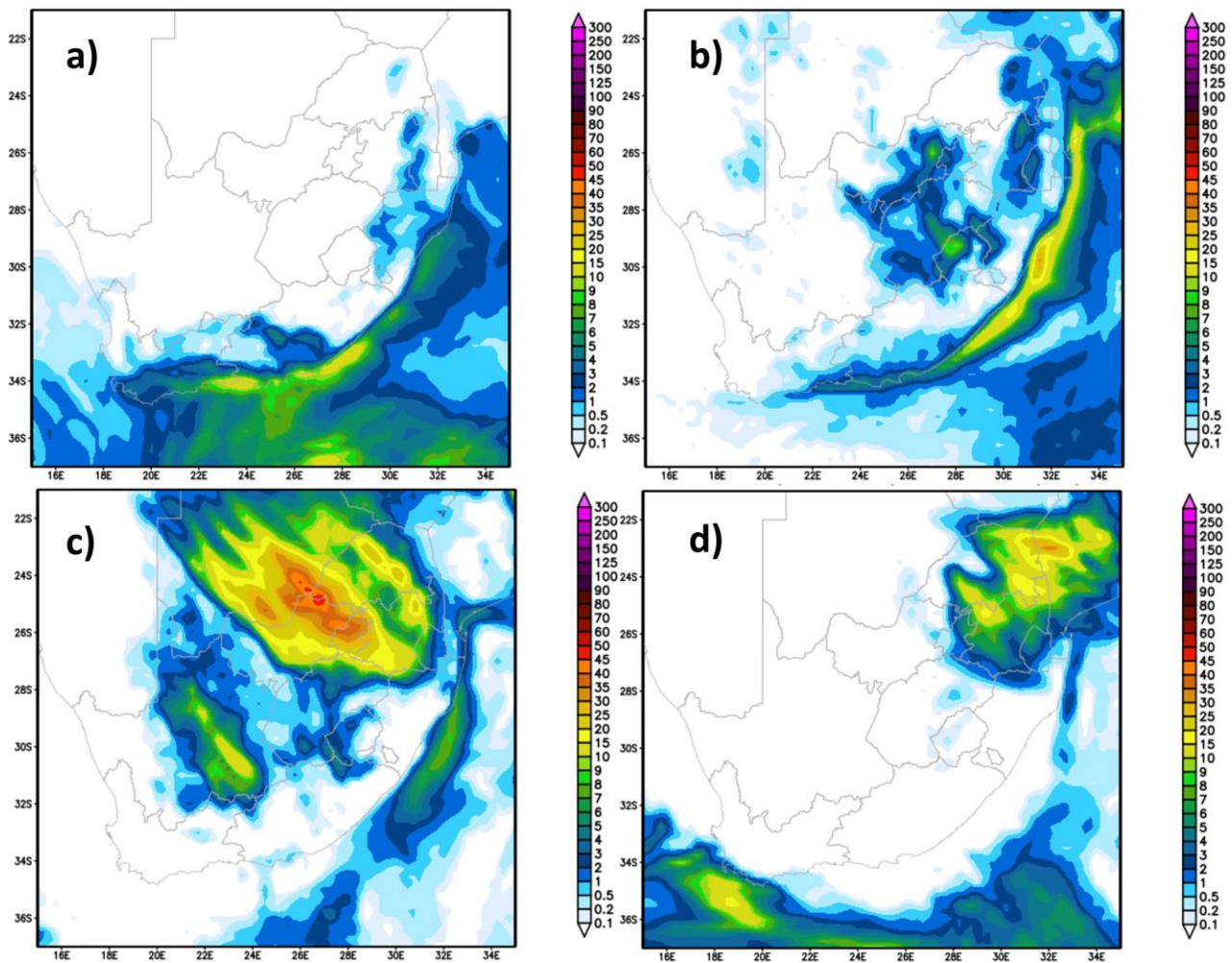


Figure 2: NWP predictions of 24-hour rainfall in mm, for (a) Wednesday 19 July, (b) Thursday 20 July, (c) Friday 21 July and (d) Saturday 22 July 2023. Note the heavier falls (of the order of 30 to 50 mm) expected over parts of the North West province, south-western Limpopo, and Gauteng on Friday, shifting eastwards during Saturday. Source: GFS model (National Centers for Environmental Prediction)

Impacts:

The public and small stock farmers are advised that the very cold, wet and windy conditions may pose a risk to livestock, vulnerable crops and plants. The public is also warned to keep warm during these cold conditions.

A Yellow level 2 warning has been issued for possible disruptive snow over the mountains of Eastern Cape, valid for 19 to 20 July 2023. Accumulation of snowfall is expected to particularly affect the Dr Beyers Naude Local Municipality (LM). Graaff Reinet is expected to be significantly affected as well as the Chris Hani District Municipality. Similarly, the mountain pass in the Barkly East area will be affected from Wednesday evening into Thursday morning. The other areas that will be affected are the Raymond Mhlaba LM, Elundini LM and Matatiele LM.

This weather system is also expected to be accompanied by strong waves and winds along the south-western and southern coast of the Western Cape. Consequently, a Yellow level 2 warning for waves leading to difficulty in navigation at sea for small vessels and personal water craft has been issued for the coastline between Cape Columbine and Plettenberg Bay on Tuesday 18 July through to Wednesday 19 July 2023.

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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