

Monday 8 June 2020

Intense cold front expected to hit South Africa

South Africans can expect a chilly, windy and wet mid-week as a cold front makes landfall in the Western Cape on Wednesday, 10 June 2020. Significant rainfall amounts and snowfalls are in the forecast for the mountainous regions of the Western and Eastern Cape as well as the extreme southern areas of the Northern Cape from Wednesday.

An intense cold front which is supported by a steep upper air trough will bring strong winds, rain and showers to the western areas of the Western and Northern Cape as well as snowfalls from Wednesday, 10 June. Ahead of this cold front, windy conditions are expected over the south-western parts of the country with strong to gale force north-westerly winds (50-70 km/h) over the interior of the Western and Northern Cape on Tuesday and will continue into Wednesday where gusty winds of 80-90 km/h can be expected. The windy conditions will also spread eastwards over the Free State and northern interior of the Eastern Cape on Wednesday. These strong winds are also expected along the western coastline of the Western Cape spreading along the southern coastal regions and along the Eastern Cape coast by Thursday. The strong winds are expected to result in difficult driving conditions, especially for high-sided vehicles on routes prone to the impacts from strong winds. In addition, very rough to high seas, with wave heights between 4.0 to 6.0 m can also be expected along the south-west coast of the Western Cape, spreading along the south coast and reaching the KwaZulu-Natal coast by Friday. During conditions such as these, it is advised that low-lying coastal rocky shores are avoided.

Rainfall (5-20 mm) is expected to start on Tuesday afternoon, 9 June, over parts of the Western Cape ahead of the cold front, with continuous rainfall expected until Thursday, 11 June. The bulk of the rainfall is expected on Wednesday, with amounts of between 20 and 50 mm (Figure 1), although in mountainous areas of the Western Cape, more significant falls are expected, possibly 30 to 60 mm. Flooding of roads

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and settlements is expected as well as a possible danger to life if attempting to cross fast flowing streams. Rockfalls and mudslides are also possible, especially along prone coastal routes.

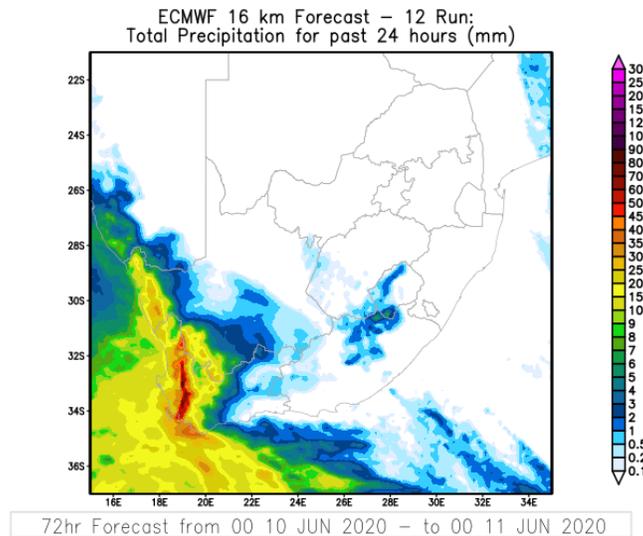


Figure 1: 24-hour rainfall amounts (mm) as projected by the ECMWF model for Wednesday 10 June 2020. Source: ECMWF

Furthermore, the frontal system will induce wintry conditions from Wednesday, with cold daytime temperatures expected, becoming very cold on Thursday and Friday over the high ground of the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, including the southern parts of the Northern Cape (Figure 2). These cold temperatures will spread further eastwards, reaching the entire Northern Cape, Free State, North West province, Gauteng, southern highveld on Mpumalanga and parts of KwaZulu-Natal on Friday (Figure 2 right) persisting on Saturday. The temperatures will start improving from Sunday. Severe frost is possible over the Free State, southern North West and in places over the Northern Cape from Friday until Monday, 15 June 2020. Small stock farmers are advised to take necessary actions ahead of time.

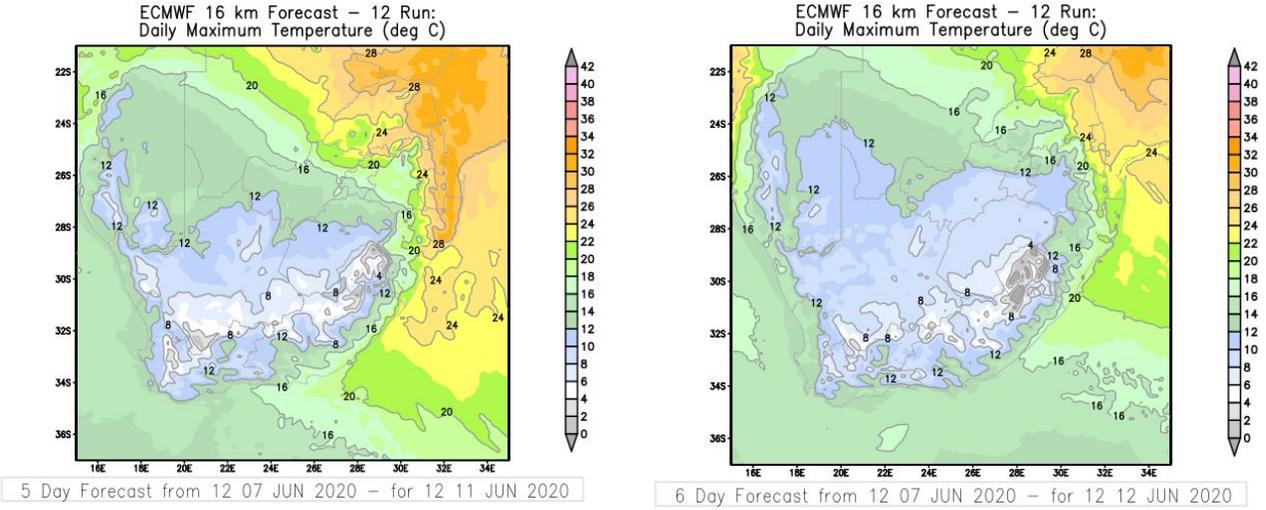


Figure 2: Predicted maximum temperature (°C) valid for Thursday 11 June (left) and Friday 12 June (right). Source: ECMWF

Along with the cold to very cold temperatures, snowfalls are expected to start on Wednesday evening over the Cederberg and Hexrivierberg mountains in the Western Cape and over the Roggeveldberg mountains in the southern high ground of the Northern Cape. The snowfall amounts are expected to accumulate and spread further eastwards over the high grounds of the Eastern Cape and extreme southern parts of the Free State on Thursday (Figure 3), persisting into Friday over the Eastern Cape.

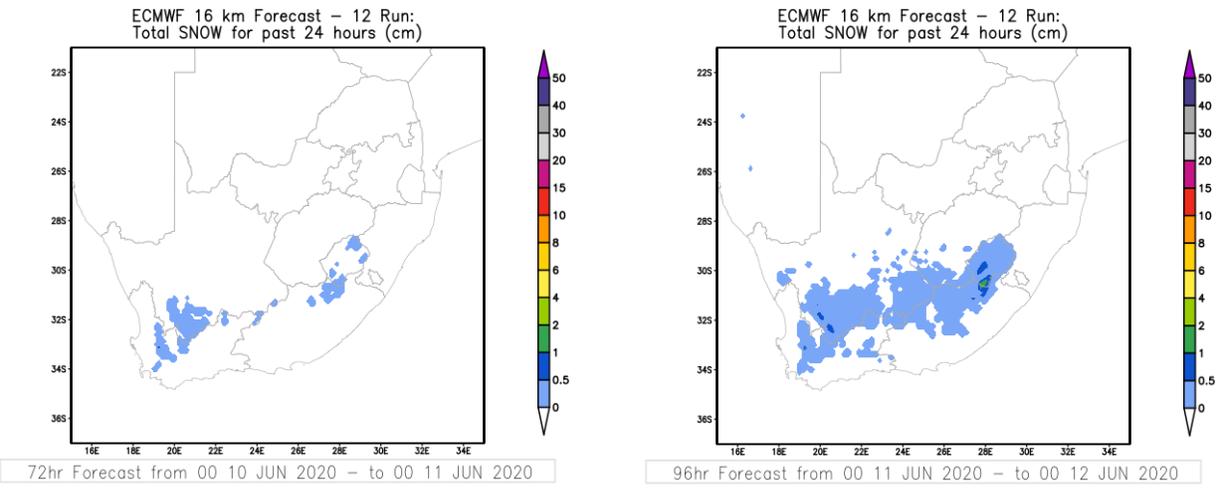


Figure 3. Snow forecast (cm) for Wednesday 10 June 2020 (left) and Thursday 11 June 2020 (right). Source: ECMWF.

While many will be excited to see snow, the South African Weather Service nevertheless strongly encourages the public to refrain from travelling to snow sites amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and the current lockdown regulations.

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor any further developments relating to this weather system and will issue subsequent updates as required timely. Furthermore, the public are urged and encouraged to regularly follow the weather forecasts issued by SAWS 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 and on the Weather Smart App.

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