NIWA Historic Weather Event Catalog

May 2009 Lower North Island and South Island Snow (2009-05-30)

Start Date

2009-05-30

Abstract

Snow fell to low levels in parts of the central and lower North Island and the South Island. Hail and strong southerly winds were also experienced. A teenager died while hunting in the snow in Canterbury. In the Waikato, four people died and three were injured in a car crash in poor weather conditions.

Return Period

Moderate

Notes

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May_2009_Lower_North_Island_and_South_Island_Snow

New Zealand Region

Multi Hazard - Duration: 3 days - From the 30th May to the 1st June.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 12:27 pm 29-May-2009: Wintry spell on Sunday with snow to sea level from Southland to the Kaikoura coast and to low levels on the hills in the south of east of the North Island. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, hills of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay and Gisborne, also inland areas of southern, eastern and central parts of the North Island.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 7:59 pm 29-May-2009: Wintry spell on Sunday with snow down to sea level from Southland to the Kaikoura coast. Snow down to unusually low levels over the North Island with heavy falls expected in the south and east. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, also hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape, Taranaki and Taupo.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 8:09 am 30-May-2009: Very cold southerly outbreak over New Zealand on Sunday. Snow down to sea level from Southland to the Kaikoura coast. Snow down to unusually low levels over the North Island with some heavy falls expected in the south and east. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, also hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape, Taranaki and Taupo.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 8:41 pm 30-May-2009: Very cold southerly outbreak over New Zealand on Sunday. Snow down to sea level from Southland to the Kaikoura coast. Snow down to unusually low levels over the North Island with some heavy falls in the south and east. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, also the hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape, Taupo and Taranaki.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 8:02 am 31-May-2009: Very cold southerly outbreak over New Zealand today. Snow down to near sea level from Southland to Kaikoura coast. Snow down to unusually low levels over the North Island with some heavy falls in the south and east. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Marlborough, also the hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape, Taupo and Taranaki.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 5:02 pm 31-May-2009: Very cold southerly outbreak over New Zealand today. Snow down to near sea level in the east of the South Island. Snow down to unusually low levels over the North Island with some heavy falls in the east. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: Canterbury, Marlborough, also the hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape, Taupo and Taranaki. WARNINGS NO LONGER IN FORCE: Heavy Snowfall Warnings lifted for Southland, Otago and South Canterbury.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 8:26 pm 31-May-2009: Very cold southerly outbreak over New Zealand slowly easing overnight and Monday morning. Further heavy snow possible about the hills and ranges from Wellington and Wairarapa up to Gisborne. Includes HEAVY SNOW WARNING for: hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay and Gisborne. WARNINGS NO LONGER IN FORCE: Heavy Snowfall Warnings lifted for Mid and North Canterbury, Marlborough, also the hills and ranges of Manawatu, Wanganui,

Taihape, Taupo and Taranaki.

Comment

MetService SEVERE WEATHER WARNING issued at 6:58 am 01-Jun-2009: Cold southerly flow and showers in the east of the North Island easing slowly today with snow levels rising. No further heavy snow expected. WARNINGS NO LONGER IN FORCE: Heavy Snowfall Warnings lifted for hills and ranges of Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay and Gisborne.

Cause

A strong southerly flow moved up the country, coming from almost on the ice caps.

North Island Region

Snow / Ice at North Island

Affected Lifeline

State Highway 5 between Napier and Taupo was closed north of Te Pohue for an hour from about 8pm on the 31st due to snow and ice. The road was able to reopen after calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) was used to de-ice the road.

Affected Lifeline

State Highway 2 was closed from the start of the Waioeka Gorge to 9 km south of Matawai on the night of the 31st due to snow, slips and a fallen tree. The road was re-opened at about 12:15pm on the 1st.

Comment

Snow fell on the Kaimai Range on 1st June.

South Island Region

Multi Hazard at South Island

Comment

Strong southerlies and snow showers battered the South Island on the 30th and 31st.

Snow / Ice

Comment

Snow fell from Southland to Kaikoura on the 31st.

Affected Lifeline

State Highway 7 through the Lewis Pass was closed to towing vehicles.

Auckland Region

High Wind / Gust at Auckland

Damage Comment

Several trees were brought down by bad weather in Auckland on the 31st.

Maritime / Coastal

Impact

The Coastguard Northern Region received a record number of calls on the 31st, for incidents including capsized yachts, people in the water, shredded sails and vessels on the rocks.

High Wind / Gust at Waitemata Harbour

Map Location

-36.831068 174.743854

Physical Characteristic

Waitemata Harbour recorded winds of nearly 50 knots (93 km/hr) on the 31st.

Waikato Region

Multi Hazard at Benneydale

Map Location

-38.523405 175.366672

Casualties

Four people, a 29-year-old man, a 30-year-old woman, a 9-year-old girl, and a 61-year-old woman, were killed on the 31st after two cars collided on State Highway 30, 11km east of Benneydale, at about 2pm. Bad weather conditions were believed to be a major factor in the crash, with heavy rain and mist present at the time. Poor weather also prevented air ambulances from Rotorua and Taupo from flying to the scene.

Injuries

A 63-year-old man incloved in the accident had to undergo surgery for his injuries. A four-year-old boy and his 10-year-old brother were also taken to hospital with injuries described as life-threatening.

Snow / Ice at Coromandel Range

Map Location

-37.096559 175.696394

Comment

Snow fell on the Coromandel Range on 1st June.

Gisborne Region

Snow / Ice at Matawai

Map Location

-38.356439 177.53729

Physical Characteristic

More than 20 cm of snow blanketed Matawai from about 5pm on the 31st.

Impact

At Matawai, the hotel, coffee lounge, bar, dairy, camping ground and community hall were closed because of the snow on 1st June.

Snow / Ice at Traffords Hill

Map Location

-38.359584 177.445845

Impact

Some vehicles got stuck in the snow on Traffords Hill at the end of the gorge.

Hawke's Bay Region

Snow / Ice at Hawke's Bay

Comment

On the 31st, snow was reported in Hawke's Bay from Wairoa in the north through to Dannevirke.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

Hawke's Bay recorded temperatures of around 1 degC and 2 degC on 1st June.

Snow / Ice at Elsthorpe

Map Location

-39.91554 176.818506

Comment

Snow was reported at Elsthorpe.

Snow / Ice at Havelock North

Map Location

-39.673179 176.882039

Comment

Snow was reported at the Triple Peaks in Havelock North.

Snow / Ice at Kaiwaka station

Map Location

-39.306444 176.808684

Comment

Snow was reported at Kaiwaka.

Snow / Ice at Napier

Map Location

-39.502426 176.892804

Comment

Light snow flurries were reported in central Napier at about 8:30pm and 10pm on the 31st.

Comment

A Napier Hill resident of 23 years said she had never experienced snow there before.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

Napier recorded a temperature of 4 degC on the 31st, with a wind chill of around 0 degC to -2 degC.

Snow / Ice at Te Mata Peak

Map Location

-39.701987 176.909923

Comment

Snow fell as low as Te Mata Peak (399 m) on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Waipawa

Map Location

-39.940581 176.600338

Comment

At Waipawa, light snow flurries started around mid-afternoon on the 31st, with heavier falls from 4:30pm that continued into the night.

Comment

Light snow coated the hills leading out to the coast near Waipawa on the morning of the 1st.

Snow / Ice at Waipukurau

Map Location

-39.999445 176.562423

Comment

Police reported blizzard-like conditions between Norsewood and Waipukurau on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Wairoa

Map Location

-39.041861 177.423248

Comment

Snow was reported at Wairoa.

Snow / Ice at Mokoia

Map Location

-39.625486 174.363237

Affected Lifeline

The Tangahoe Bridge on State Highway 3 was closed to heavy vehicles on 1st June.

Taranaki Region

Snow / Ice at Inglewood

Map Location

-39.163073 174.187246

Comment

Sleet fell in Inglewood on the 31st.

High Wind / Gust at New Plymouth

Map Location

-39.051214 174.06972

Impact

Two 17-year-old girls had to be rescued after they started drifting out to sea in a kayak off East End beach on the 31st. The weather conditions were atrocious, with howling southerlies.

Snow / Ice at Stratford

Map Location

-39.343721 174.267614

Comment

Sleet fell in Stratford on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Urenui

Map Location

-38.997709 174.384059

Impact

A car lost control and crashed at Urenui on a road with black ice.

Manawatu-Wanganui Region

Snow / Ice at Desert Road

Map Location

-39.30009 175.73859

Affected Lifeline

The Desert Road (State Highway 1) between Waiouru and Rangipo was closed on the morning of the 1st due to heavy ice on parts of the road.

Fog

Affected Lifeline

Fog on the Desert Road made driving conditions difficult on the evening of the 1st. Visibility fell to just metres around the summit of the road.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

The Desert Road recorded a minimum temperature of -4 degC on the 1st.

Snow / Ice at Norsewood

Map Location

-40.070333 176.220649

Comment

Light snow flurries fell at Norsewood from about 1:30pm on the 31st, followed by a heavy fall for an hour from 4pm.

Physical Characteristic

Most of the ground was covered in about 5 cm of snow.

Snow / Ice at Palmerston North

Map Location

-40.355525 175.616438

Comment

Light snow fell in Palmerston North on 1st June.

Multi Hazard at Waiouru

Map Location

-39.466728 175.685937

Physical Characteristic

Waiouru recorded a temperature of 0 degC at lunchtime on the 31st.

Snow / Ice

Comment

Waiouru experienced snow flurries on the 31st.

Wellington Region

Multi Hazard at Wellington

Comment

Wellington experiened bitterly cold winds, showers and hail.

Snow / Ice

Comment

Snow dusted the hills around Wellington on the 31st and fell to sea level along the south coast. Snowfalls were also reported on the Kapiti Coast.

High Wind / Gust

Physical Characteristic

Wellington had southerly gales gusting close to 120 km/hr on the 31st.

Hail

Comment

Heavy hail fell around Wellington mid afternoon on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Johnsonville

Map Location

-41.222057 174.79585

Comment

Snow fell in gutters and on hilltops around Johnsonville and Whitby. Falls were also reported on the Kapiti Coast.

Snow / Ice at Karori

Map Location

-41.287365 174.736134

Comment

Snow fell in gutters and on hilltops around Karori.

Snow / Ice at Khandallah

Map Location

-41.247302 174.79415

Comment

Snow fell in gutters and on hilltops around Khandallah.

Hail at Lower Hutt

Map Location

-41.216677 174.934068

Comment

Hail fell at Lower Hutt on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Masterton

Map Location

-40.964296 175.667649

Comment

Some parts of Masterton received a light fall of snow on the 31st.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

Masterton Airport recorded a minimum temperature of 0 degC early on the 31st.

Physical Characteristic

Masterton Airport recorded a maximum temperature of 7 degC on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Mount Bruce

Map Location

-40.751506 175.596369

Comment

Paddocks and hills surrounding State Highway 2 at Mount Bruce were coated in snow.

Snow / Ice at Porirua

Map Location

-41.141089 174.818671

Comment

Snow was reported at Porirua.

Snow / Ice at Rimutaka Hill

Map Location

-41.119029 175.230172

Affected Lifeline

There was snow and ice on the Rimutaka Hill Road on State Highway 2.

Physical Characteristic

Rimutaka Hill had about 10 cm of snow on the night of the 31st.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

At the top of the Rimutaka Hill, a temperature of 1 degC was recorded at midday on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Upper Hutt

Map Location

-41.139372 175.055716

Comment

Snow was reported at Upper Hutt.

Multi Hazard at Wellington City

Map Location

-41.28855 174.776764

Physical Characteristic

Wellington recorded a temperature of 3.7 degC at lunchtime on the 31st, with a wind chill of -5 degC.

Physical Characteristic

Wellington recorded a minimum temperature of 3.5 degC on the 31st.

Comment

Wellington's CBD experienced snow flurries on the 31st - the first in 14 years.

Snow / Ice at Whitby

Map Location

-41.113346 174.891747

Comment

Snow fell in gutters and on hilltops around Whitby.

Marlborough Region

Snow / Ice at Blenheim

Map Location

-41.517124 173.949021

Comment

Snow flurries were reported in Blenheim on the 31st.

Multi Hazard

Physical Characteristic

Blenheim recorded a minimum temperature of -4.5 degC overnight on the 31st/1st.

Physical Characteristic

Blenheim recorded a temperature of -4 degC at 8am on the 1st.

Snow / Ice at Molesworth station

Map Location

-42.085266 173.252655

Physical Characteristic

Molesworth Station received 7-10 cm of snow on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Mount Adde

Map Location

-41.652044 174.020613

Comment

The Mt Adde farm in the Awatere Valley received a thick coating of snow on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Picton

Map Location
-41.295063 174.011495
Comment
Snow flurries were reported in Picton on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Wither Hills

Map Location
-41.558739 173.980195
Comment
Wither Hills received a fall of snow mid-afternoon on the 31st.

Canterbury Region

Snow / Ice at Canterbury

Comment
Snow settled to about 200m around Canterbury on the 31st.
Physical Characteristic
Northern Canterbury recorded 5-10 cm of snow on the 31st.

Multi Hazard at Arthur's Pass

Map Location
-42.943869 171.566812
Physical Characteristic
Arthur's Pass recorded a minimum temperature of -5.8 degC on the 1st.

Multi Hazard at Christchurch

Map Location
-43.53112 172.636147
Physical Characteristic
Christchurch recorded a temperature of 2 degC at 12pm on the 31st, with a wind chill of -6 degC.
Physical Characteristic
Christchurch recorded a maximum temperature of 5 degC on the 31st.
Comment
Hail and sleet fell in Christchurch on the 31st.

Multi Hazard at Kaikoura

Map Location
-42.402255 173.685685
Physical Characteristic
Kaikoura recorded a maximum temperature of 4 degC on the 31st.

Multi Hazard at Mount Hutt Skifield

Map Location
-43.495213 171.524135
Comment
Mount Hutt Skifield opened on the 30th - its earliest opening in 15 years.
Impact
Mount Hutt Skifield was closed for the day on the 31st due to gale force winds and poor visibility.
Physical Characteristic
Mount Hutt Skifield received 5-10 cm of snow overnight on the 30th/31st.

Snow / Ice at Mount Peel

Map Location

-43.846424 171.156692

Casualties

An 18-year-old boy died after apparently slipping on snow and tumbling down a 200m slope while hunting in The Blue Slips area, near Mt Peel, on the afternoon of the 31st. His body was found at 5:30pm.

Multi Hazard at Oxford

Map Location

-43.296138 172.188342

Comment

At Oxford, blizzard conditions were reported on the 31st, with moderate snow falls and high winds.

Snow / Ice at Springfield

Map Location

-43.334894 171.921445

Physical Characteristic

Springfield had about 8 cm of snow on the ground on the 31st.

Multi Hazard at Timaru

Map Location

-44.398445 171.2552

Physical Characteristic

Timaru recorded a maximum temperature of 6 degC on the 31st.

Otago Region

Snow / Ice at Otago

Physical Characteristic

Eastern Otago recorded 5-10 cm of snow on the 31st.

Snow / Ice at Dunedin

Map Location

-45.87911 170.502707

Physical Characteristic

Dunedin recorded a maximum temperature of 7 degC on the 31st.

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