



MET SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

News clips late June-early July 2008 (overlooked before)

Anniversary of avalanche programme

By Felicity Wolfe on Fri, 13 Jun 2008 Otago Daily Times
Minister of Transport Annette King made the long journey from the Beehive to Te Anau yesterday to celebrate an avalanche control programme that both saves lives and keeps one of this country's busiest tourist routes open.

It has been 25 years since the death of a Te Anau road worker prompted the development of the Milford Road Avalanche Programme, which keeps State Highway 94, between Te Anau and Milford open all year round.

Mrs King unveiled a plaque commemorating the programme's achievements.

The avalanche control system, which costs more than \$1 million a year to operate, uses state of the art technology developed locally and in conjunction with the MetService and Transit New Zealand. The programme was first begun in the 1970s but was further developed by Te Anau resident and avalanche control manager Wayne Carran after the death of a friend while he was clearing debris.

He vowed the tragedy would not be repeated and instigated better communication units and the development of technology to better monitor what was happening in the icepacks on the high mountain slopes.

Downer EDI Works Te Anau manager Ann Carran said despite the improved technology, the people who worked for the programme were its backbone.

"They don't mind when we call them out in the middle of the night - they are the strength of it."



Pre-frontal spell dumps Blenheim in a fog

The Marlborough Express | Monday, 16 June 2008



DEREK FLYNN/The Marlborough Express

SMOTHERED: Blenheim was shrouded in fog this morning as was Wellington, which meant flights in and out of the capital were grounded from 8.30am.

Following an unseasonably warm day yesterday of 21 degrees, fog swept into town smothering central Blenheim this morning. MetService weather ambassador Bob McDavitt said Blenheim was experiencing pre-frontal conditions.

North easterly winds from the tropics carried warm moist air which turned to fog when it hit colder climes, in the same way the condensation formed on a bathroom mirror, Mr McDavitt said.

Auckland, where he was speaking from, was experiencing the front in the form of heavy rain.

All day fog could result in Blenheim if heavy cloud formed above the fog blocking the sun from burning it off, Mr McDavitt said.

Making white gold

By DEBBIE JAMIESON - The Press | Tuesday, 17 June 2008



Powder puff: automated snow guns will begin operating when the right combination of temperature and humidity exists and will stop when conditions change.

Nothing beats natural snow for skiing and snowboarding but the reality of New Zealand's variable winters is that perfect powder is rare. Queenstown's Coronet Peak was among the first to install snow-making technology, in 1990, shortly after it became available. Very quickly, snow-making capacity became essential to the financial survival of New Zealand's commercial skifields.

This year, Coronet Peak's owners have gone a step further firing up New Zealand's largest fully automated snow-making system. The \$12 million upgrade has brought the number of snow guns on the mountain to 203. Water is collected and stored at three reservoirs on the mountain where it is aerated to maintain a consistent, chilling temperature of between 1.5 and 2degC. It is pumped on request to strategically placed snow guns where it combines with a small amount of compressed air and is fan-fired into the atmosphere during periods when the right combination of temperature and humidity forms snow crystals.

There is no absolute temperature at which snow can be made. For example, 3 degrees is relatively warm but with 20 per cent humidity the conditions are good for snowmaking while snow cannot be produced with a temperature of -1degC and 90% humidity.

The beauty of the computerised, fully automated system is that the guns have the "intelligence" to measure conditions the system incorporates 120 individual weather stations, and responds accordingly. It will begin operating when the right combination of temperature and humidity exists and will stop when conditions change. Furthermore, each snow gun will fire out the quality of snow it has been pre-programmed to produce.

Snow quality is measured on a scale of one to nine, with one being the driest and most desirable snow although the most difficult to make, and nine the wettest, heaviest and the easiest to produce in large quantities. Early in the season snow-makers tend towards the

top end of the scale to ensure good coverage before focusing on better quality, powder-like snow. 380,000 million litres is available over the season and is used with a 95% recycle rate. (Abridged)

Wintry blast closes roads

By MARCUS STICKLEY and NZPA - Nelson Mail | Wednesday, 25 June 2008



ALASTAIR PAULIN/Nelson Mail

DICEY DRIVING: Motorists negotiate Takaka Hill Tuesday afternoon shortly before the snow forced its closure until Wednesday morning.

Three Nelson roads remained closed Wednesday morning and motorists are being urged to drive with "extreme caution", after the region was hit by an icy winter blast.

In the North Island, snow closed the Desert Rd between Rangipo and Taihape and SH4 through National Park, leaving SH3 via Taranaki the only north-south route open. Police also warned drivers to take care on the Rimutaka Hill Rd, between Upper Hutt and Featherston, because of ice. (Abridged)

Welcome to winter

Wednesday, 25 June 2008 STUFF



WINTER WONDERLAND: The view from a metroliner aircraft about 100 kilometres north of Christchurch taken by Captain Jeff Evans. Inset: Scenes from Arrowtown.

The polar blast which has caused havoc on the country's roads this week has eased, with light snow showers likely only near the mountain summit in the next few days. (Abridged)

Snow hits the south

The Southland Times | Tuesday, 24 June 2008



Sonia Gerken / 126850

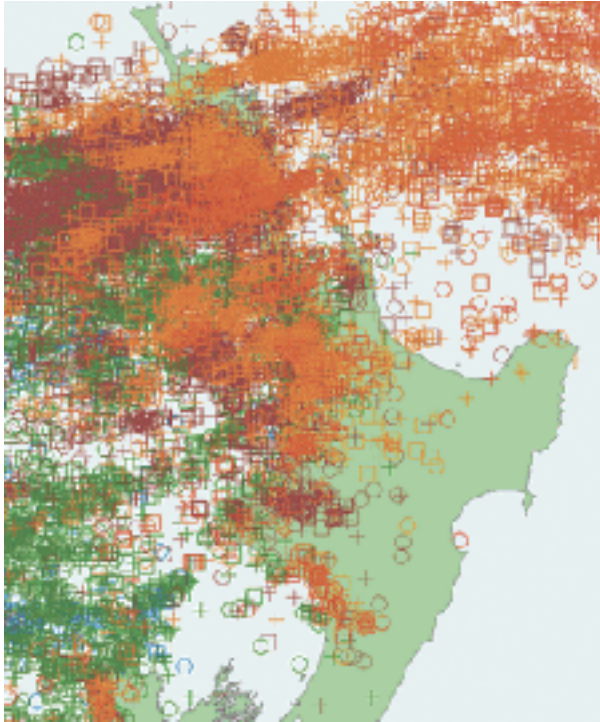
Tapanui youngsters Mathew McKee (left) and Troy McIvor, both aged 7, swimming in the snow lying in the West Otago town this morning.

A polar blast has dumped snow and hail on many parts of Southland and the Southern Lakes region today, disrupting travel and closing rural schools. Up to 30cm of snow was recorded

around Heriot, 10cm at Mid Dome, 7.5cm around Gore and 3cm near Clinton. (Abridged)

20,000 lightning strikes

By NATALIE AKOORIE - Waikato Times | Thursday, 26 June 2008



HOT SPOTS: A map from MetService shows thousands of lightning strikes in the 24-hours to 8am.

? Thunder and lightning roared over Waikato skies last night in an incredible electrical storm which struck the North

Island. An astounding 1500 lightning strikes reportedly cut through Waikato skies from 11pm when the storm erupted and continued through the night.

More than 20,000 lightning strikes were recorded over the country during the 24-hours to 7.30am today, according to MetService duty forecaster Chris Noble. "Lightning is not an uncommon event but to have that amount in a 24-hour period, that's pretty significant in terms of a front moving up the country followed by unstable showers."

Lightning punches hole in plane

Sunday June 29, 2008 NZ Herald By Jared Savage



Almost 600 passengers were on flights hit by lightning last week. Photo / Herald on Sunday

Lightning punched a hole in the nose of a jet carrying nearly 300 passengers as it came into Auckland last week.

The Lan Chile Airbus was one of two South American planes struck as they landed in a huge electrical storm. The passengers, flying from Sydney to Santiago via Auckland, were left stranded overnight and the plane was grounded for two days while parts were flown in from South America. One witness said the hole was the size of a dinner plate.

An Aerolineas Argentinas plane carrying a similar number of people was also damaged as New Zealand was pounded by almost 15,000 lightning strikes in 24 hours.

Two Air New Zealand flights were also struck by lightning on Wednesday; one, a flight from Wellington to Auckland, hit as it was descending. Passengers on the Boeing 737 saw "a ball of light" to the left of the aircraft and heard a clap of thunder.

All aircraft are fitted with static dischargers that dissipate the energy from any lightning strike back into the atmosphere. Since the exterior of most aircraft is metal, the electrical charge in the lightning bolt travels along the surface, causing only minor damage, such as pits or burns. (abridged)

Weather woes continue across NZ

Sunday, 29 June 2008 Southland Times



TY COCHRAN

WHITEOUT: The Desert Road, Saturday afternoon, just prior to its closure.

Snow, rain and gale force winds closed roads, halted interisland ferry travel and threw the plans of some air travellers in Wellington into disarray. Roads in the central North Island were closed as snow and ice areas around Mount Ruapehu treacherous for motorists. Afternoon Cook Strait ferry crossings have also been cancelled as winds and 7m swells make conditions too rough. Hundreds of travellers have been affected. (abridged)

Better weather check

The Marlborough Express | Tuesday, 01 July 2008

The Extended Brief Mountain Forecast, available on Radio New Zealand National from the beginning of this week, will lengthen the period of MetService's forecast for the major mountain areas of New Zealand from two to five days.
(Abridged)

Cold? You ain't seen nothing yet

Thu, 3 Jul 2008 Otago Daily Times



Snow at Middlemarch on June 24. Forecasters say more is on the way.
Photo by Jenny Elliot.

MetService forecasters have warned the coldest weather of the week is yet to come, with severe gales and snow forecast for tomorrow and Saturday. The cold snap will result from a low pressure system crossing the South Island.

"The low is likely to bring bursts of heavy rain and snow, and to be followed by an area of severe southerly gales," MetService Weather Ambassador Bob McDavitt said. "This is a not a good time to be outdoors." (Abridged)

Snowed in from north to south
Jul 5, 2008 TVNZ



Snow has fallen in parts of the central and lower North Island which have not seen such falls for years. The polar blast has worked its way up both islands, even dumping white powder on the Kaimai Ranges overlooking Tauranga. Snow and ice have closed roads and wrought

havoc with motor vehicles on both sides of Mt Ruapehu, from the Desert Road south to Mangaweka on State Highway One. Heavy snowfalls blanketed the Central Plateau as far south as Hunterville. And even the sunshine city of Nelson has had a dusting of snow with a few centimetres settled on the ground in places. (abridged)

Frosty finale to storm forecast

By KIM THOMAS - The Press | Monday, 07 July 2008



DON SCOTT/The Press

HARD LANDING: Several yachts in Lyttelton Harbour came to grief during the rough weather at the weekend.

Heavy frosts are forecast to grip the country over the next few days in the wake of the worst storm of the winter.

Snow, gales, hail and high seas battered much of New Zealand during the weekend, closing roads, bringing down powerlines and trees, and driving yachts aground. Cook Strait ferry services were cancelled or delayed because of strong winds. (Abridged)

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Severe frosts forecast across NZ

Monday July 07, 2008

By James Ihaka NZ Herald and David Eames NZPA



A Waiouru police car gets some welcome local assistance following a weekend of freezing temperatures. Photo / Sarah Ivey

After a week of serious snowfalls across the country, clearing skies will mean some of the toughest frosts of the winter so far, MetService warned today. Spokesman Bob McDavitt said a slow-moving anticyclone was nudging in, bringing with it clear nights and light winds. "The scene is being set for several nights in a row with severe frosts and roads with black ice", he said. "It'll be great for skiing but hazardous for driving."

Some inland valleys were still shaded from the low winter sun and air that had been chilled by recent snowfalls would be trapped until the northerly winds returned on Thursday, Mr McDavitt said.

He said that forecast overnight lows were for air temperature, not ground temperature. "Frosty ground is usually 3 or 4 C cooler than the overnight low, so our forecasts for -2C to -3C for a place like Queenstown until Thursday indicate 6 and 7 C of frost." (Abridged)

Drivers urged to be vigilant as heavy frosts loom

By Matthew Haggart on Tue, 8 Jul 2008 Otago Daily Times



Emergency services workers right a four-wheel-drive vehicle which hit ice and flipped outside Puzzling World at Wanaka yesterday morning. Photo by Marjorie Cook.

The MetService yesterday issued a severe frost warning for the whole country, cautioning motorists to watch for black ice on roads. Central Otago emergency services and tow truck operators are already busy dealing with crashed cars, as icy roads have been causing havoc for drivers. (Abridged)

Winds rip roof off

07.07.2008 Northern Advocate by André Hueber and Kristin Edge



BLOWN AWAY: Donald (right) and Richard Fisher walk through the debris after the roof was ripped from their Northland home.

Powerful gusts tore a roof off a new home on Northland's west coast as winter unleashed its full fury across the region. Strong winds combined with thunderstorms produced hail, gales and possibly even a few flakes of snow which saw temperatures plummet in Northland on Saturday. (Abridged)

Weirdly warm weather in Kaikoura - at 1am

Saturday July 12, 2008 NZPA

Western areas of the country were hit overnight by heavy rain and strong winds while favourable winds pushed the temperature in Kaikoura to 21degC early this morning. The MetService said the area around Mt Taranaki received 100mm of rain in the 24 hours to 6am, and 60mm fell in Milford Sound. (Abridged)

Spring fever for Wellington

The Dominion Post | Monday, 14 July 2008



CRAIG SIMCOX/Dominion Post

BEACH CRICKET: Josh Kururangi from Normandale in action at Petone beach during a welcome break from the wintry weather.

It almost felt as if spring was in the air as Wellingtonians basked in weather of up to 17 degrees celsius, grateful Friday night's storm was behind them. (Abridged)

Coastal North Island battered by massive waves

3 News Wed, 23 Jul 2008 6:32p.m.



Coastal parts of the North Island have been battered by huge waves and storms, causing one man in Paekakariki to be swept away as he was on the shore taking photographs.

"It just knocked all the wind out of me," resident Neil Thomas said. "I blacked out and the next thing I know there's this woman pulling me out of the water. She's trying to drag me out and saying we've got to get out before the next waves."

"On the west coast of the North Island it is unusual for swells to get this large," Peter Kreft from MetService says. "And the last event we had where the waves were anywhere like this was in March 2007." (Abridged)