



Met Society Newsletter

JANUARY WEATHER CLIPPINGS

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<http://metsoc.rsnz.org/Newsletter/clips200901.pdf>

Unseasonal weather takes toll in south

By WILL HINE in Queenstown | Saturday, 03 January 2009 Southland Times



©BARRY HARCOURT/135381

MUDBATH: Alan Chalmers of the Te Anau Rodeo Club inspecting the club's rodeo ground yesterday afternoon. The annual event was cancelled after consistent rain turned the arena into a quagmire.

Unseasonal weather caused disruption and discomfort through the south yesterday as wind, rain and cold hit areas from Invercargill to Central Otago. Heavy downpours in the south-west prompted the cancellation of today's Te Anau rodeo and forced campers to take refuge in their tents while temperatures plummeted in Queenstown, strong winds tore down powerlines and tree limbs in Alexandra and a rodeo in Wanaka yesterday ended in a mudbath.

Metservice forecaster Andy Downs said more than 100mm of rain fell in Fiordland in a 24-hour period spanning the first two days of the year.

In Invercargill, persistent rain caused blocked drains to flood, while further north a crowd of about 2000 at the Wanaka Rodeo and sat out heavy rain and a

quickfire thunderstorm to watch events from beneath an array of makeshift shelters created from tarpaulins and horse blankets. (Abridged)

Hail Storm Hits North Canterbury Farmers

Tuesday, 6 January 2009, 3:56 pm Scoop

Press Release: Federated Farmers

“The man who survived for more than 30 hours adrift on a jet ski during Saturday’s hail storm was incredibly lucky, but that storm hit many North Canterbury cropping farmers hard,” says Paul Stackhouse, North Canterbury Federated Farmers Grain and Seed chairman.

“The golf ball sized hail stones that swept across North Canterbury on Saturday carved a six to eight kilometre path of destruction through crops, with the damage estimated to be well in excess of one million dollars.

“I know of one farmer who incurred \$250,000 worth of damage to his crops. A number of Rape Seed crops were also badly affected by the hail stones. This includes one farmer who saw some 40 hectares of crops literally stripped bare.

“The heaviest hail stones fell from the Waimakariri River to north of Amberley. If farmers had crops of any kind under that storm when it hit those crops would have suffered damage.

PURPLE PADDOCKS

Wed 7 Jan 2009, Timaru Herald



Harvesting pacific blue lavender near Geraldine yesterday were volunteers Mark and Gary Shade. The men harvested about 40 rows which were then transported immediately to the distillery in Amberley. Lavender is grown commercially for extraction of lavender oil from the flowers. This oil can be used as an antiseptic and for aroma therapy. Lavender can also be used in potpourri and dried and sealed in pouches it can be stored among items of clothing to give a fresh fragrance and as a deterrent to moths.

Sunblock and hats were the order of the day yesterday with temperatures hitting 28C, and going by the forecast the hot weather is here to stay for the next few days anyway. According to the MetService it was 28C at the Richard Pearse Airport at 4pm yesterday, meeting the day's expected high. Today people can prepare for an

even warmer day with a forecast high of 31C, and the shade cloth will be needed tomorrow with Timaru predicted to hit 33C.

Hot weather blasts NZ, melts Desert Road - more to come

08 Jan 2009 NZ HERALD



Hot weather blasted the country today with temperatures in Christchurch reaching 40 degrees Celsius.

Hotter than normal temperatures were widespread over New Zealand with 12 locations between Timaru and Gisborne recording temperatures of more than 30degC, MetService spokesman Bob McDavitt said.

Rain was pummeling Stewart Island and parts of Southland but the weather was fine from Queenstown north, he said.

The MetService had recorded air temperatures up to 35.7degC in Christchurch, which made it the hottest day of the summer so far and neared its January record high of 35.9degC in 1979.

However, Christchurch-based weather analyst Richard Green told the New Zealand Herald thermometers reached 40degC in the early afternoon with the suburb of Barrington reaching 41degC, Cashmere 40degC and Christchurch city 38degC.

Mr McDavitt said this hot air was part of the weather system that brought temperatures to over 40degC in Sydney recently.

"The air is 20 to 25 degrees coming off the Tasman Sea and warming by around 10 degrees when it crosses the Southern Alps and spreads over the Canterbury plains."

Mr McDavitt advised people feeling stressed by the heat to drink more water, stay inside or go for a swim. (Abridged)

Heat rises, tempers flare

The Press | Friday, 09 January 2009



The hottest January day in Canterbury for 30 years set off fire alarms and sent thousands of people to the beaches yesterday.

Tempers flared at Sumner Beach, where Christchurch police had to break up a fight.

The official MetService temperature hit 35.7deg in Christchurch just before 3pm, just behind the highest January maximum of 35.9deg in 1979.

It was the hottest day in the city since March 1998, when the temperature reached 35.9deg. Amateur observers in Christchurch and North Canterbury reported unofficial highs between 38deg and 40deg.

The heat is set to continue today, with temperatures reaching 29deg or 30deg before a southerly sweeps in tonight.

Christchurch road workers did their best to stay a step ahead of the heat.

City Care drainage foreman Russell McDonald said workers were taking water and shade breaks every hour to ensure they did not suffer sunstroke.

"It really drains you. We're working in the middle of the road with no break from the sun, so it does slow you down," he said.

Heat wave may bring more cyclones

Taranaki Daily News | Friday, 09 January 2009 Taranaki Daily News



CAMERON BURNELL/Taranaki Daily News

Andrea Polglasse and Esther Taylor-Pundie take 11-month-old Katelyn for a paddle at New Plymouth's Ngamotu Beach last night.

Taranaki sweltered under its hottest day of the summer yesterday - but escaped the extremes plaguing other parts of the country where the mercury zoomed into the high 30s.

The Desert Road melted and fires burned as temperatures soared across the country in what is forecast to be a long, dry summer. MetService spokesman Bob McDavitt said the top temperature in Waiouru yesterday was 28.2C - but anything above 28C would melt the Desert Road. Tar melting was also reported north of Auckland.

Hotter than normal temperatures were widespread over New Zealand yesterday, with 35.7C recorded in Christchurch. In New Plymouth, the temperature reached 24.2C at the city weather site.

Niwa's National Climate Centre's seasonal outlook for January to March shows summer is set to be a hot one for most regions - but scientists have also warned the warmer weather could also bring more cyclones our way. Niwa's climate outlook for January to March says La Nina conditions would mean more north-easterly winds, which bring moist conditions to the north-east of the North Island, and reduced rainfall to the south and south-west of the South Island.

Winding up on the sand

The Dominion Post | Friday, 09 January 2009



KENT BLECHYNDEN/The Dominion Post

Visiting players from Brazil, got their first taste of Wellington weather which turned out to be hot and not too windy yesterday as they prepared for this weekend's beach volleyball tournament at Oriental Bay.

Athletes Nina Zgoda, 22, and Fernanda Costa, 18, had not visited New Zealand before but they had heard tales about Wellington. "The first thing we heard was about the wind, that it is a windy city. When you play volleyball in the wind it means you have to be very patient.

34.6 - It was our hottest day on record!

10.01.2009 By Don Farmer Wairarapa Times Age



Plenty of youngsters enjoying a dip at the Masterton pool. Photo: Matt Stewart

If you got a bit hot under the collar on Thursday there was a good reason, it was officially the hottest day on record in Wairarapa.

Temperatures peaked at 34.6 degrees Celsius recorded at the automatic weather station at Te Ore Ore, just east of Masterton and only fractionally lower at the East Taratahi climate station that recorded a top of 34.3 degrees at 5.30pm.

The previous highest official temperatures were 33.1 degrees at Te Ore Ore on a January day in 2006 and 34.1 in 2004 at East Taratahi.

Weather experts said it could be that people taking their own readings got an even higher result but the official temperatures had to be recorded using a strictly scientific method and proper recording equipment.

Andrew Tait, of NIWA in Wellington, said climate station thermometers are housed inside a Stevenson screen, or instrument shelter, that shields the instruments from direct heat radiation but allows air to circulate freely around them.

The wooden box with louvres is situated 1.2 metres above ground.

Wairarapa records have been taken at East Taratahi only since 1973 and at Te Ore Ore since 1992.

According to NIWA's records the highest temperatures ever recorded anywhere in New Zealand were on February 7, 1973 when the mercury skyrocketed to 42.4 degrees Celsius at Rangiora in Canterbury and to 39.2 degrees at Ruatoria in the central North Island.

Both fall far short of the highest temperature recorded across the Tasman where 53 degrees Celsius in Cloncurry, Queensland, holds the record.

That temperature was recorded in 1889. Abridged

Extreme weather starting to pressure insurance premiums

Tue, 13 Jan 2009 7:21p.m. 3News



The weather of 2008 had as much of an economic impact on us as an environmental one. Severe droughts and storms highlighted a year that proved to be both expensive and extreme.

“Climate change and weather related disasters are now probably the most significant thing that the insurance industry is dealing with,” says the Insurance Council’s Chris Ryan.

“The biggest extreme in terms of cost to the country was the drought last summer, and that’s been estimated to have cost about a billion dollars in lost agricultural production,” says Dr Jim Renwick of the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA).

MAF puts the cost at closer to \$1.4 billion to the economy and Federated Farmers said the drought was out of the ordinary.

NIWA says last year’s severe droughts and flash flood are something we can expect more of.

And this will come at a cost.

“I think what climate change is doing now and the pressures it is putting on New Zealand is costing the insurance industry such a significant amount that premiums are almost certain to rise,” says Mr Ryan.

3 News

Slip, slop, slap or risk skin cancer



14.01.2009 Northern Advocate

It's especially important that children slip, slop, slap and wrap. Picture/supplied by Lindy Laird

A fair-skinned person caught outside and unprotected in Whangarei today could, in less than 15 minutes, suffer a serious injury that will eventually prove fatal.

Niwa predicted that today's ultra violet (UV) index in Whangarei would be 13, or extreme. Most days in the past week have been over 10.

Without sunblock or shade, a fair-skinned person's skin would start to fry in less than 15 minutes, with a dark-skinned or Polynesian person taking possibly twice as long.

In 20 to 30 years, says Jim Callaghan from Cancer Society Northland, the result of that sunburn could be melanoma. In New Zealand 1800 new cases developed last year, and of the other less deadly forms of skin cancer, there were 45,000 new cases. Over 90 per cent of all skin cancers stem from sun damage. “It's usually childhood sunburn that causes the cancer that shows up later in life.”

Niwa defines the "alert period" as the period when the clear sky ultra violet index forecast is greater than 3. When the UVI is 3, damage to fair skin can occur in less

than 1 hour. When the UVI is 12, damage to fair skin can occur in less than 15 minutes.

Weather bomb hits the Bay

15.Jan 2009 BOP Times



PICTURE: BRUCE TAYLOR: Vehicles slow as they make their way on SH29 through the Kaimai Range about 5.50pm yesterday

Thunder, lightning and hail wreaked havoc across Katikati and the Kaimai Range last night, setting shelter belt trees alight, flooding buildings and causing chaos on the roads.

Katikati chief fire officer Joe Manukau said buildings and streets were flooded almost instantly.

"We just had a deluge, all in a matter of about an hour, then it was all over," he said. Pipes and drains were quickly blocked, he said, prompting calls from property owners whose houses were flooding. Abridged

31 foot launch hoisted by water spout

January 15, 2009 Newstalk ZB

A waterspout near Great Barrier Island has picked up a 31 foot launch and thrown it down on its side.

Occupants of vessels in Smokehouse Bay said there was no wind prior to the spout, but then at 10.50pm a "screaming wall of wind" came over the hill and everyone on the bay hunkered down for safety.

Coastguard says the launch was picked up and dumped on its side, leaving the two people aboard with cuts and bruises. The launch was reported to be taking on water but has suffered no serious damage.

The waterspout's arrival at Great Barrier Island followed an awe-inspiring electrical storm in the area that continued for well over an hour.

Lights, camera ... and action

4:00AM Friday Jan 16, 2009 NZ Herald Isaac Davison



Spectators watch from Narrowneck Beach in Devonport as lightning flashes in the Auckland sky. Photo / Brett Phibbs

It was the best show in town, and admission was free.

Herald photographer Brett Phibbs captured this remarkable image about 10.30 on Wednesday night as spectators on Narrowneck Beach in Devonport gazed at a spectacular lightning storm which swept the skies above Auckland.

At the storm's peak, 1200 lightning strikes an hour were recorded over the upper North Island, said the Weatherwatch Centre.

Metservice weather ambassador Bob McDavitt said the electrical storm was the result of sea breezes converging over the Coromandel Peninsula.

"Auckland had only a light breeze, with clear skies, but when this south-west wind met still air in the Coromandel, it produced a lot of moisture in the air, and a large storm. It has been a while since we have had a large electrical storm. A lot of static electricity must have built up in the atmosphere."

RARE TWISTER SEEN OVER SUMNER

Ian Steward - Canterbury | Monday, 19 January 2009 The Cave (Website)



BENN CLEMENCE

"A particularly fine example" of a waterspout near Scarborough Hill.

A waterspout that graced the Sumner skyline yesterday could have caused significant damage if it had made landfall, an expert says.

The rare atmospheric phenomenon, similar to a tornado, was spotted off Scarborough Beach about 10am yesterday.

Sumner resident Tim Clemence said he was surfing when he noticed the waterspout. "It was absolutely phenomenal. It came down like a little finger out of the cloud. It went all silent and quiet eerily quiet. It just exploded when it hit the water. It looked like it was vacuuming the surface of the sea."

Clemence paddled back to shore to get a camera and the waterspout moved around Sumner Head towards Taylors Mistake and Lyttelton Harbour.

Blueskies Weather forecaster Tony Trewinnard said yesterday's "unstable" atmosphere, with temperature and wind structure supporting rapidly rising air currents, suited the development of the spout.

If some of those rapidly rising currents got a little bit of rotation from wind swirling off hills or cliffs, a vortex that gained in intensity and wind speed could form, he said. Over water, the sea was sucked into the vortex, which made the air current visible. If the waterspout had made landfall, it "would have caused some trouble", Trewinnard said. "It's not going to cause mass destruction, but it would be enough to blow out windows or destroy sheds."

Trewinnard said the waterspout's narrow diameter 10 or 20 metres meant destruction would have been contained and selective. Trewinnard said he had witnessed several waterspouts but yesterday's was "a particularly fine example".



Thunder storms lash Christchurch Mon 19 Jan 2009 Newstalk ZB/One News



Almost 2,000 lightning strikes were recorded in Christchurch on Sunday when a storm hit the city. A combination of a low pressure system and hot summer sun caused the thunder storms, which was most severe between 3pm and 5pm. The lightning strikes also caused several brief power outages across the city. Large swathes of Canterbury have been pelted with hail and drenched by heavy rain in another freak summer storm. More than 20 millimetres of rain fell in Christchurch and Ashburton, flooding streets and houses, and leaving hundreds of homes without power.

Storm gives city short sharp shock

SAM McKNIGHT - | Tuesday, 20 January 2009 Southland Times



JUST A QUICK SHOWER: A car ploughs through a flooded intersection of Tay and Lorn streets in Invercargill during Saturday's storm.

Thunder, lightning and rain lashed Invercargill on Saturday, inundating emergency services, causing widespread surface flooding and disrupting events across the city.

MetService severe weather forecaster Chris Noble said the storm dumped about 19mm on the city 30 minutes from 6pm, a significant amount in such a short time. There were 160 lightning strikes, with many centred on the city, while one woman said she saw lightning strike Invercargill's landmark water tower.

NEW ZEALAND INSURANCE EXPECTED TO RISE AFTER STORMY 2008

January 20, 2009 TVNZ

Insurance can be costly, and it's about to get more expensive as the risk from climate related disasters increases due to global warming.

In 2008, five storms cost insurers more than \$86 million with July seeing the highest number of storm related claims for a single month ever. The first event was windstorms and flooding that affected nearly all parts of the North Island, costing \$26 million. It was followed three days later by another storm that caused even more damage to areas in the lower South Island and the North Island costing \$42 million.

Later in the year a brief but intense hailstorm damaged around 3,500 vehicles, a number of house spoutings and conservatories, and many skylights in commercial buildings. "Insurers are still counting the cost of the November Canterbury hailstorms estimated to cost insurers between \$10m to \$12 million," says council insurance manager, John Lucas.

All the bad weather has experts estimating that insurance premiums will rise by 5% - 10% in 2009.

Hay days far from relaxing

Nelson Mail 20 Jan 2009



Cut and dried: Steve Sangster hard at work bailing hay on a Brightwater property last week

This summer has been a bumper season for hay and baleage but it has not been without its stresses, reports Laura Basham. Making hay while the sun shines sounds good, but it also means fielding a lot of stressful phone calls. The problem this summer has been that the sun did not shine much before Christmas, and while there has been a lovely three-week dry spell until last weekend, and bumper crops, there is also a backlog for contractors. Abridged

Shine taken off town's pride

Thursday Jan 22, 2009 By Alanah May Eriksen NZ Herald



Marketing manager Mary Hermanson wants Whakatane recognised as the sunniest town in New Zealand. Photo / Alan Gibson

Whakatane has demanded a recount after being disqualified from winning the coveted title of Sunshine Capital of New Zealand. The annual accolade, described as a "million-dollar marketing opportunity", is highly contested among the country's hotspots.

Blenheim was awarded the gong by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (Niwa) last week after it recorded 2505 hours of sunshine for 2008. But it may be stripped of its crown after scientists re-test Whakatane's readings. The Eastern Bay of Plenty town recorded 2703 hours on their sunshine sensor last year and the council was hoping to back up the town's current slogan: Living with the sun. But Niwa decided the number was abnormally high and the town was disqualified.

After much protest from Eastern Bay economic development agency, Toi-EDA, Niwa checked the sensor on Tuesday and found no fault. Toi-EDA marketing manager Mary Hermanson said the equipment was only two years old and that particular model was purchased under the advice of Niwa so it couldn't be faulty. She said the hours probably seemed high because the council only started recording in 2007 so there was not much to compare them to.

The decoder, on the roof of a building at the town's oxidation ponds, was purchased from Norway for about \$5000 as part of a town fundraiser in September 2006 to get the town on the map. The machine sends information back to Whakatane District Council each day.

Whakatane came third in the sunny stakes in 2007 with 2550 hours. Blenheim again took the top position, followed by Lake Tekapo.

"It's just funny how when we came third no one questioned it but now that we had a chance at first, they come calling," Ms Hermanson said.

Mayor for the Marlborough District Council, which includes Blenheim, Alistair Sowman, said Whakatane had "come out of the blue a wee bit".

"Good luck to them. If they are the sunniest town I have no issue with it but it has to be a fair competition."

Niwa has said the machine could be measuring parts of cloudy days instead of completely cloudless hours. It plans to install a second sunshine recorder, similar to the type used in Blenheim, next to the current one for a month. If data from both machines is the same, Blenheim will be stripped of the title and Whakatane will be crowned sunniest spot in New Zealand.

Good as Gold

Marlborough Express, 23 Jan 2009 Blair Ensor



As the apricot season draws to a close, Marlborough Express reporter BLAIR ENSOR catches up with one of the few stone fruit growers left in Marlborough. Murray is the first to admit that it's been a below-par season, with cold weather and rain hampering pollination and lowering fruit volume. An unusual cold snap in late August and early September kept the bees in their hives. At other key times in the season, however, the weather was on his side. Abridged

Hot weather staying around for anniversary party Saturday Jan 24, 2009 NZ Herald By Alanah May Eriksen



An orange sunset silhouettes a fisherman on Devonport Wharf. Photo / Brett Phibbs

The long weekend will be a perfect opportunity to hit the beach and catch some rays for most areas. Auckland Anniversary Day on Monday coincides with several events around the top of the North Island, leaving residents spoiled for choice. MetService forecaster Andy Best said it would be mostly sunny skies in Auckland this weekend with maximum temperatures reaching 25C today, tomorrow and on Monday.

Clouds and light sea breezes expected in the area during the afternoon will make perfect conditions for Monday's Oceanbridge Auckland Anniversary Day Regatta on the Waitemata Harbour - the largest single-day regatta in the world, first held 169 years ago.

Phew! It ain't half hot mum.

Tues 27 Jan 2009 Ashburton Guardian



Jen Sheppard had her hands full while keeping cool in the Hinds pool with – from left – Ben Sheppard, 3, Holly Boyle, 23 months, Brandyn Boyle, 6, and Sara Sheppard, 23 months.

Photo Carmen Rooney 250109-CR-124

Phew! It ain't half hot mum. Those famous words from the 1970s British sitcom of the same name would have fitted in well with the searing summer heat which sapped the Ashburton District during the weekend.

Pool swimmers, beach-goers, campers, trampers, marching band members and anyone who ventured outside of the safety of their own home was hit by a wave of humid heat (33 degrees officially yesterday and 40% humidity, but there were

unofficial reports that Darfield reached 35 degrees and Oxford hit 37).

AUST HEATWAVE SIGN OF CLIMATE CHANGE TVNZ/Reuters 29 Jan 2009

A heatwave scorching southern Australia, causing transport chaos by buckling rail lines and leaving more than 140,000 homes without power, is a sign of climate change, the government said.

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting a total of six days of 40-plus Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) temperatures for southern Australia, which would equal the worst heatwave in 100 years.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong said the heatwave, which started on Wednesday, was the sort of weather scientists had been warning about. "Eleven of the hottest years in history have been in the last 12, and we also note, particularly in the southern part of Australia, we're seeing less rainfall," Wong told reporters.

"All of this is consistent with climate change, and all of this is consistent with what scientists told us would happen."

The maximum temperature in southern Australia on Thursday was 46 degrees Celsius (114.8 Fahrenheit) in four towns.

In Melbourne, which recorded its hottest day in 70 years at 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) on Thursday, rail lines buckled and trains were cancelled, stranding thousands of hot and angry commuters.

The heatwave forced the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne to suspend outside matches, with officials closing the retractable roof over the main stadium for the past two days.

Australia is one of the most vulnerable nations to climate change due to its hot, dry climate and is already gripped by drought. Fire bans have been declared in southern Australia to prevent major bushfires but small fires are already burning.

TV rivals fight to be first with Tauranga forecast

30.01.2009 BOPP Times by Reon Suddaby

The weather wars have broken out in Tauranga, with TV3 set to trump rival broadcaster TVNZ by giving the city its own spot on the 3 News weather forecast from tonight - and a weather camera is not far away either.

TV3 director of news and current affairs Mark Jennings this morning told the Bay of Plenty Times that Tauranga's growing population was the catalyst for the city getting its own detailed weather forecast, alongside Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.