

January 2026

Issued: 5 February 2026

Record rainfall for portions of both islands

Temperature	January temperatures were well above average (>1.20°C above average) for small portions of the Coromandel, western Northland, coastal Gisborne, the Māhia Peninsula, and western Tasman. Above average temperatures (0.51-1.20°C above average) were recorded for the remainder of Northland, most of Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, the Waikato, about the Central Plateau, Hawke's Bay, and remainder Gisborne, as well as coastal areas of Fiordland, Westland, and far western Tasman. Below average temperatures (0.51-1.20°C below average) occurred in all of interior Otago, northern Southland, northern Canterbury and a small portion of mid-Canterbury, with near average temperatures ($\pm 0.50^\circ\text{C}$) elsewhere.
Rainfall	Rainfall was well above normal (>149% of normal) or above normal (120-149% of normal) in Canterbury, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, majority of the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Taranaki, majority of Manawatū-Whanganui, Wellington, Auckland, and Northland, with portions of the Coromandel and Bay of Plenty exceeding 400% of normal. Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) or well below normal (<50% of normal) in the West Coast, Southland, and much of Central Otago. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall (80-119% of normal) fell in January.
Soil Moisture	At the end of January, soil moisture levels were higher than normal in eastern Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, the Waikato, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, northern and eastern Manawatū-Whanganui, majority of Wellington, Nelson, Tasman, northern Westland, Marlborough, Canterbury, and coastal areas of Otago. Soil moisture levels were lower than normal in lower Westland, Fiordland, most of Southland, the far west of Otago and western Northland. Near normal soil moisture levels were observed in the remainder of the country.

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Overview

January 2026 continued the summer theme of lower than normal mean sea level pressure (MSLP) over Aotearoa New Zealand, primarily driven by two long-lived areas of low pressure, one tropical and one subtropical, during the second half of the month. La Niña conditions continued through the month of January, despite La Niña weakening during the month. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) surrounding New Zealand were mostly above average, however the SST anomalies eased throughout the month due to the aforementioned pair of low pressure systems and increased

windiness across New Zealand's waters. At the end of January, Marine Heatwave (MHW) conditions¹ were no longer present across any of New Zealand's coastal areas.

The nationwide average temperature in January 2026 was 17.2°C. This is right at the 1991-2020 January average. While there were several periods dominated by high pressure, overall the month was unsettled much like December, with a distinct tropical connection around the middle to end of the month, leading to warm nights and record setting rainfalls. Temperatures were well above average (>1.20°C above average) for small portions of the Coromandel, western Northland, coastal Gisborne, the Māhia Peninsula, and western Tasman. Above average temperatures (0.51-1.20°C above average) were recorded for the remainder of Northland, most of Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, the Waikato, about the Central Plateau, Hawke's Bay, and the remainder of Gisborne, as well as coastal areas of Fiordland, Westland, and far western Tasman. Below average temperatures (0.51-1.20°C below average) occurred in all of interior Otago, northern Southland, northern Canterbury and a small portion of mid-Canterbury, with near average temperatures (±0.50°C) elsewhere.

Tropical air poured across New Zealand from 18-22 January, which led to record setting rainfall and flooding for large portions of the North Island and upper South Island. Rainfall was well above normal (>149% of normal) or above normal (120-149% of normal) in Canterbury, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, majority of the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Taranaki, majority of Manawatū-Whanganui, Wellington, Auckland, and Northland, with portions of the Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, and North Canterbury exceeding 300-400% of normal. Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) or well below normal (<50% of normal) for the West Coast, Southland, and much of Central Otago. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall (80-119% of normal) fell in January.

Further Highlights:

- The highest temperature was 36.8°C, observed at Napier on 11 January.
- The lowest temperature was 0.0°C, observed at Waipounamu on 30 January.
- The highest 1-day rainfall was 274 mm, recorded at Tauranga on 21 January.
- The highest wind gust was 194 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 11 January.
- Of the six main centres, Tauranga was the warmest and wettest, Dunedin was the coolest, driest, and least sunny, and Auckland was the sunniest.
- The sunniest four regions in 2026 so far are Taranaki (286 hours), Tasman (270 hours), Auckland (258 hours), and wider Nelson (254 hours).

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Temperature: An average January

No location observed record-setting high or low mean air temperatures, as temperatures were moderated this month by unsettled weather and clouds for both islands, and southerly winds across parts of the South Island late in the month. Four locations observed near-record high mean temperatures. The country's warmest location relative to normal was Kawerau, where the mean temperature of 22.1°C was 2.3°C above normal.

¹ Defined as five or more consecutive days with SSTs above the 90th percentile for the time of year.

Record² or near-record mean air temperatures for January were recorded at:

Location	Mean air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Chatham Island	17.3	1.6	1878	3rd-highest
Whitianga	21.1	1.4	1962	3rd-highest
Kawerau	22.1	2.3	1954	4th-highest
Raoul Island	24.2	1.6	1991	4th-highest
Māhia	19.2	0.8	1990	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

Record or near-record mean maximum air temperatures for January were recorded at:

Location	Mean maximum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Kawerau	28.8	3.0	1954	2nd-highest
Whitianga	26.2	1.0	1962	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Cheviot	20.8	-2.5	1982	2nd-lowest
Middlemarch	20.2	-2.3	2000	3rd-lowest
Waipounamu	19.8	-0.8	1980	4th-lowest
Culverden	20.3	-2.3	1928	4th-lowest
Waipara West	20.9	-2.3	1973	4th-lowest

Record or near-record mean minimum air temperatures for January were recorded at:

Location	Mean minimum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Raoul Island	23.3	3.5	1991	Highest
Gisborne	15.9	1.6	1905	2nd-highest
Chatham Island	13.8	1.7	1878	3rd-highest
Mt Ruapehu Chateau	8.5	1.8	2000	3rd-highest
Napier	16.7	2.4	1870	4th-highest
Whitianga	16.3	2.1	1962	4th-highest
Gisborne	15.8	1.6	1905	4th-highest
Mōtū	12.7	2.1	1990	4th-highest
Campbell Island	7.9	0.7	1991	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

² The rankings (1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.) in all Tables in this summary are relative to climate data from a group of nearby stations, some of which may no longer be operating. The current climate value is compared against all values from any member of the group, without any regard for homogeneity between one station's record, and another. This approach is used due to the practical limitations of performing homogeneity checks in real-time.

Rainfall: Tropical rains smashed several records

Two significant areas of low pressure in January 2026 drove the record or near-record rainfall amounts experienced in Northland, Auckland, the Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Canterbury, and Marlborough. A subtropical low developed west of Northland and brought a very moist easterly wind flow 18-20 January, leading to flooding rains for a small portion of eastern Northland. This low pressure system was followed by a potent tropical low that moved out of the Coral Sea and over and across New Zealand from 20 to 22 January, which caused flooding rains, leading to slips, and record rainfall totals. 15 locations recorded their wettest or second-wettest January, including an astounding 494 mm of rain at Whitianga in the Coromandel Peninsula. Kaikōura logged 266 mm of rain in January, which is 562 percent of normal.

Record or near-record January rainfall totals were recorded at:

Location	Rainfall total (mm)	Percentage of normal	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Gisborne	278	389	1905	Highest
Kaikōura	266	562	1898	Highest
Māhia	171	320	1990	Highest
Cheviot	170	455	1982	Highest
Pukaki Airport	128	233	1972	Highest
Brothers Island	89	227	1983	Highest
Whitianga	494	515	1961	2nd-highest
Tauranga	393	515	1898	2nd-highest
Hicks Bay	315	397	1916	2nd-highest
Mt Ruapehu Chateau	309	180	2000	2nd-highest
Purerua	283	491	1983	2nd-highest
Auckland (Whenuapai)	242	371	1943	2nd-highest
Auckland (Western Springs)	223	341	1948	2nd-highest
Waiau	159	271	1974	2nd-highest
Le Bons Bay	125	340	1984	2nd-highest
Warkworth	321	433	1966	3rd-highest
Waikeria	207	297	1921	3rd-highest
Whakatu	155	338	1982	3rd-highest
Te Puke	301	312	1973	4th-highest
Auckland (North Shore)	274	408	1966	4th-highest
Whatawhata	222	249	1952	4th-highest
Hāwera	159	225	1977	4th-highest
Culverden	147	339	1921	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Ōkārito	134	46	1981	4th-lowest

January climate in the six main centres

Temperatures for the six main centres were near average or slightly above average. Rainfall was above normal or well above normal for five of the six main centres, with Auckland and Tauranga both receiving record or near-record January rainfall. A majority of the rain for Tauranga fell on the 21st of January, with Tauranga recording a record-setting 274 mm on that day. Of the six main centres, Tauranga was the warmest and wettest, Dunedin was the coolest, driest, and least sunny, and Auckland was the sunniest.

January 2026 main centre climate statistics:

Temperature			
Location	Mean temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Comments
Auckland ^a	20.0	+0.2	Near average
Tauranga ^b	20.6	+0.8	Above average
Hamilton ^c	19.2	+0.7	Above average
Wellington ^d	16.7	-0.3	Near average
Christchurch ^e	16.6	-0.5	Near average
Dunedin ^f	15.2	0.0	Near average
Rainfall			
Location	Rainfall (mm)	% of normal	Comments
Auckland ^a	199	357	Second-wettest on record
Tauranga ^b	393	518	Second-wettest on record
Hamilton ^c	129 ³	171	Above normal
Wellington ^d	120	152	Above normal
Christchurch ^e	91	215	Above normal
Dunedin ^f	75	106	Near normal
Sunshine			
Location	Sunshine (hours)		
Auckland ^a	258		
Tauranga ^b	246 ⁴		
Hamilton ^g	192 ⁵		
Wellington ^d	208		
Christchurch ^e	179		
Dunedin ^f	165		

^a Māngere ^b Tauranga Airport ^c Hamilton Airport ^d Kelburn ^e Christchurch Airport ^f Musselburgh ^g Ruakura

³ Missing 7 days of data.

⁴ Missing 2 days of data.

⁵ Missing 5 days of data.

Highlights and extreme events

Temperatures

The highest temperature was 36.8°C, observed at Napier on 11 January.

The lowest temperature was 0.0°C, observed at Waipounamu on 30 January.

January was marked by slightly warmer than average minimum temperatures and marginally cooler than average maximum temperatures. The hottest day of the month occurred on 11 January, with high pressure departing ahead of a strong cold front which produced gusty westerly winds that pushed temperatures into the middle 30s in the east of both islands. The highest temperature was 36.8°C, observed at Napier on 11 January, becoming the second-warmest January day on record at that location. Additionally, Whakatu (36.3°C) and Kaikōura (34.3°C) experienced their hottest January day on the 11th.

The coldest minimums occurred at the end of the month as high pressure moved across the South Island, leading to relatively clear skies and chilly nights and a record setting daily minimum temperature at Waipounamu of 0.0°C on 30 January.

Record or near-record daily maximum air temperatures for January were recorded at:

Location	Extreme maximum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Whakatu	36.3	11th	1982	Highest
Kaikōura	34.3	11th	1963	Highest
Warkworth	32.7	31st	1966	Highest
Raoul Island	31.0	19th	1991	Equal highest
Napier	36.8	11th	1868	2nd-highest
Hastings	36.5	11th	1930	2nd-highest
Kerikeri	32.7	11th	1945	2nd-highest
Whitianga	31.8	11th	1962	2nd-highest
Whangaparāoa	30.0	11th	1982	2nd-highest
Mōtū	29.8	10th	1990	2nd-highest
Le Bons Bay	30.9	11th	1984	Equal 2nd-highest
Kaitaia	30.5	10th	1948	Equal 2nd-highest
Kawerau	35.0	11th	1954	3rd-highest
Māhia	32.5	11th	1990	3rd-highest
Kaikohe	30.4	10th	1973	3rd-highest
Purerua	29.8	12th	1983	3rd-highest
Secretary Island	26.4	20th	1985	4th-highest
Chatham Island	25.2	11th	1878	4th-highest
Whangārei	30.8	11th	1967	Equal 4th-highest
Arapito	27.2	21st	1978	Equal 4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Raoul Island	19.0	11th	1992	Lowest
Mt Ruapehu Chateau	9.6	24th	2000	Equal 2nd-lowest
Hastings	16.2	3rd	1972	Equal 3rd-lowest
Whatawhata	17.1	20th	1952	Equal 4th-lowest

Record or near-record daily minimum air temperatures for January were recorded at:

Location	Extreme minimum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
Low records or near-records				
Waipounamu	0.0	30th	1980	Lowest
Lower Retaruke	0.1	31st	1966	Lowest
High records or near-records				
Raoul Island	27.0	26th	1992	Highest
Hastings	21.6	12th	1972	2nd-highest
Kaitaia	21.4	22nd	1948	2nd-highest
Whitianga	21.1	15th	1971	3rd-highest
Purerua	20.5	15th	1983	3rd-highest
Kaikōura	20.4	11th	1972	3rd-highest
Auckland (Western Springs)	21.4	15th	1971	Equal 3rd-highest
Leigh	20.9	15th	1966	Equal 3rd-highest
Cheviot	20.2	11th	1982	Equal 3rd-highest

Rain, flooding, and slips

The highest 1-day rainfall was 274 mm, recorded at Tauranga on 21 January.

On 3 January, more than 1000 homes lost power as a series of short and intense thunderstorms moved across the Gisborne region. Power Co reported an outage affecting over 1300 properties in the Waikato town of Tirau. Residents in Muriwai, south of Gisborne, took to social media to report power cuts and torrential rain.

On 11 January, flooding closed the key road link between Canterbury and the West Coast, as a fierce thunderstorm swept over the region that afternoon. State Highway 73 between Otira and Arthur's Pass was closed in the afternoon but re-opened that evening.

On 15-16 January, a police rescue occurred to retrieve people stuck between landslips on State Highway 2 in the Waioweka Gorge between Ōpōtiki and Gisborne after severe thunderstorms. Almost 18,000 lightning strikes were recorded across the North Island in 19 hours following severe thunderstorms, with flooding and slips closing several parts of State Highway 2 between Ōpōtiki and Gisborne.

Also on 16 January, a local helicopter pilot helped bring stranded people to safety after they were trapped in the Waioweka Gorge. A police-led rescue was launched on a stretch of State Highway 2 between Gisborne and Ōpōtiki after dozens of people were stranded by huge slips caused by heavy rain.

On 18 January, parts of Northland were hit by significant flooding overnight, with one resident saying it was the worst he's seen in 60 years. A sub-tropical low developed west of Northland, drawing in a strong easterly wind flow laden with tropical moisture. Ngunguru, Helena Bay, Ōākura, Punaruku and Whangaruru were cut off by flooding. The Ngaiotonga Bridge washed out and there were multiple slips between Whangaruru and Helena Bay. MetService reported up to

150-200mm of rain fell over the eastern hills north of Whangārei.

Additional heavy rain with a tropical low caused widespread flooding, slips, and damage on 20-22 January, see section below.

Record or near-record January extreme 1-day rainfall totals were recorded at:

Location	Extreme 1-day rainfall (mm)	Date of extreme rainfall	Year records began	Comments
Tauranga	274	21st	1910	Highest
Whitianga	248	21st	1961	Highest
Purerua	196	21st	1983	Highest
Te Puke	193	21st	1973	Highest
Hicks Bay	189	21st	1916	Highest
Gisborne	129	3rd	1937	Highest
Wairoa	115	3rd	1929	Highest
Whakatu	102	21st	1982	Highest
Māhia	85	21st	1990	Highest
Kerikeri	167	21st	1945	2nd-highest
Manapouri	163	10th	1971	2nd-highest
Kaikōura	101	23rd	1898	2nd-highest
Tautuku	57	24th	1976	2nd-highest
Cheviot	42	15th	1982	2nd-highest
Brothers Island	39	14th	1983	2nd-highest
Le Bons Bay	36	22nd	1984	2nd-highest
Whakatāne	116	21st	1952	3rd-highest
Napier	91	21st	1870	3rd-highest
Hāwera	84	15th	1977	3rd-highest
Russell	171	21st	1919	4th-highest
Mt Ruapehu Chateau	68	15th	2000	4th-highest

Tropical low 20-22 January

Tropical air poured across New Zealand from 20-22 January, which led to record rain and flooding for large portions of the North Island and upper South Island. The area of low pressure that moved in from the Coral Sea on 20-22 January impacted the north and east of the North Island and the upper South Island. This weather system brought strong winds and heavy rain, with the greatest impacts observed in Northland, Auckland, the Coromandel, the Bay of Plenty, and Gisborne. The following lists some of the most notable features of the event:

- A person and their vehicle was reported missing after being washed out into a river in Warkworth the morning of 21 January. His body was found a few days later.
- Northpower reported more than 1000 properties lost power across its network due to an unplanned outage, including in Ōakura, Whangaruru, Helena Bay and Whakapara.
- A number of families on Auckland's Great Barrier Island were forced to evacuate as the island was in the middle of the storm's path between Northland and the Coromandel Peninsula.

- An 11-day operation occurred at Mount Maunganui, as six people were killed when a landslide struck a holiday park on 22 January at the base of Mauao.
- The Gisborne District Council said communities around Te Araroa, Onepoto, and Wharekahika/Hicks Bay were the worst hit, with the intense deluge that began on Wednesday (21 January) evening necessitating evacuations.
- Sections of State Highway 35 in Gisborne were closed and coastal communities between Pōtaka near Hick's Bay and Tikitiki were cut off where the road was damaged by widespread flooding and slips.
- Nine total people were killed or are presumed dead after the storm.
- Thames Coromandel Civil Defence said 115 properties damaged, with several buildings damaged in the Bay of Plenty and the Whangārei District.

Wind

The highest wind gust was 194 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 11 January.

Record or near-record January extreme wind gusts were recorded at:

Location	Extreme wind gust (km/h)	Date of extreme gust	Year records began	Comments
Paraparaumu	131	12th	1972	Highest
Hokitika	119	11th	1972	Highest
Whitianga	87	31st	1991	Highest
South West Cape	180	11th	1991	Equal highest
Windsor	91	11th	2001	2nd-highest
Dargaville	84	24th	1997	2nd-highest
Oamaru	93	11th	1984	3rd-highest
Dannevirke	90	12th	1961	3rd-highest
Tauranga	87	21st	1973	3rd-highest
Castlepoint	158	11th	1972	Equal 3rd-highest
Puysegur Point	158	11th	1986	Equal 3rd-highest
Mokohinau Island	109	19th	1994	4th-highest
Auckland Airport	94	24th	1971	4th-highest
Hanmer Forest	94	11th	1995	4th-highest
Upper Hutt (Trentham)	93	12th	1999	4th-highest
Port Taharoa	87	21st	1978	4th-highest
Bromley	87	11th	1972	4th-highest

Lightning, hail, and tornadoes

On 3 January, a lightning strike set fire to a house in the Auckland suburb of Grey Lynn, as thunderstorms hit the centre of the region. Fire and Emergency said the lightning caused a blaze throughout the roof of the two-storey house on Home Street. It was contained to that property and put out.

Also on 3 January, a Northland recreational boater captured a waterspout on camera as he was sailing out of Whangārei Harbour. The boatie told RNZ he could see a thunderstorm heading towards his vessel from the west. One member of the crew then spotted something forming over the Mount Manaia range of Whangārei Heads.

On 15 January, there were reports of small tornados in the North Island. One tornado happened near Orewa, north of Auckland, at about 7pm. The second reported tornado was seen near the Waikato town of Ōtorohanga.

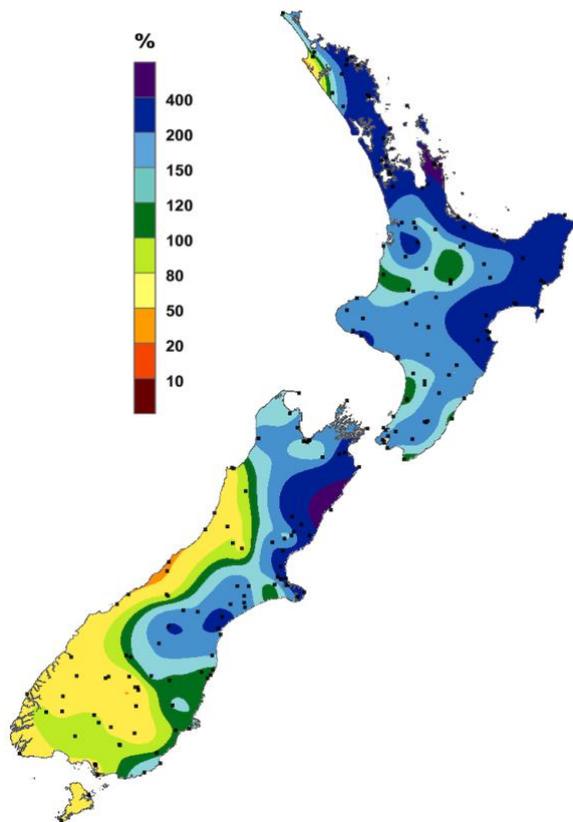
On 23 January, firefighters in Canterbury responded to a house believed to have been struck by lightning, and another where the ceiling caved in. Fire and Emergency said it received eight weather related callouts in half an hour across Kaiapoi and Rangiora.

For further information, please contact:

Chester Lampkin

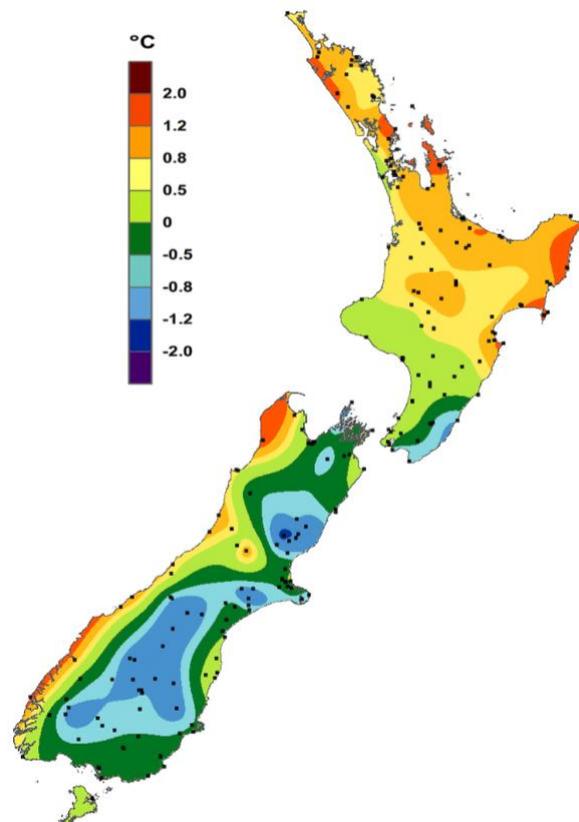
Meteorologist

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January rainfall

Expressed as a percentage of the 1991-2020 normal.



January temperature

Expressed as a departure from the 1991-2020 average in degrees Celsius.

<https://earthsciences.nz/research/climate-and-weather>

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