

February 2026

Issued: 5 March 2026

February dominated by a historic storm mid-month

Temperature	Temperatures were well above average ($>1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average) only in isolated parts of northwest Tasman. Above average temperatures ($0.51\text{--}1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average) were recorded in Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, and parts of Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, Auckland and Northland. Below average temperatures ($0.51\text{--}1.20^{\circ}\text{C}$ below average) occurred across Wellington and south Wairarapa, and substantial parts of the eastern and lower South Island. Elsewhere, near average temperatures ($\pm 0.50^{\circ}\text{C}$ of average) prevailed in February.
Rainfall	Rainfall was well above normal ($>149\%$ of normal) across large parts of the eastern, central and southern North Island, pockets of eastern Northland, Banks Peninsula and parts of coastal Canterbury and Marlborough. Rainfall was above normal ($120\text{--}149\%$ of normal) for Fiordland and parts of coastal Otago. In contrast, rainfall was below normal ($50\text{--}79\%$ of normal) or well below normal ($<50\%$ of normal) for Nelson–Tasman, inland parts of Marlborough and Canterbury, Otago, and Southland. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall ($80\text{--}119\%$ of normal) occurred.
Soil Moisture	At the end of February, soil moisture levels were below normal in upper Northland, lower Manawatū, along the Kāpiti Coast, about eastern Nelson, and the Marlborough Sounds. Soil moisture levels were above normal for Banks Peninsula and other parts of eastern Canterbury and Marlborough, about Taupō, most of the eastern and lower North Island, as well as parts of Bay of Plenty, Waikato, and parts of eastern Northland. Near normal soil moisture levels were typical for the remainder of the country.

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Overview

February will be remembered for the “Valentine’s Storm” – a low-pressure system originating in the subtropics which deepened dramatically as it stalled near and to the east of the country in the middle of the month. Another low-pressure system with more limited impacts opened the month, and these two depressions dominate the overall monthly pressure anomaly. However, in between these systems there were some prolonged periods of settled weather over New Zealand. La Niña conditions continued through most of the month of February, but were approaching ENSO-neutral by the end of the month. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) surrounding New Zealand were extremely variable during the month, exhibiting warming trends during settled periods only to cool dramatically in response to unsettled weather, especially around the middle of the month. At the end of February, Marine Heatwave (MHW) conditions¹ were absent from New Zealand coastal

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

waters, but a broad and significant MHW persisted in the subtropical waters to our northeast. This MHW originated in November and continued to influence our weather on occasions during February.

The nationwide average temperature in February 2026 was 16.9°C. This was 0.5°C below the 1991-2020 February average, and it was the coolest February since 2012.

The month started with tropical air moving over the northern half of the country, with the highest air temperatures and dew point temperatures of the month recorded during this period. Cold air moved onto New Zealand in the wake of the two low pressure systems, leading to some notably low daytime temperatures in eastern parts of the country.

Overall, February featured lower than normal air pressures directly over the country. However, this anomaly only represents the most significant weather systems of the month, obscuring the fact that there were several periods of slow-moving high pressure systems over New Zealand. This resulted in rainfall that was dramatic in intensity and fell on a relatively small number of days in the month (“boom or bust” rainfall patterns). Rainfall was above average or well above average for areas exposed to these two significant weather systems – areas in the east of both islands, and the central North Island.

Further Highlights:

- The highest temperature was 33.6°C, observed at Hastings on 2 February.
- The lowest temperature was -0.7°C, observed at Waipara River North Branch on 28 February.
- The highest 1-day rainfall was 243 mm, recorded at Akaroa on 16 February.
- The highest wind gust was 241 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 16 February.
- Of the six main centres, Tauranga was the sunniest, Auckland was the driest and warmest, Wellington was the wettest, and Dunedin was the coolest and least sunny.
- The sunniest four regions in 2026 so far are wider Nelson (555 hours), Taranaki (536 hours), Bay of Plenty (535 hours), and Tasman (529 hours).

Temperature: A cool February for many

No location observed a record or near-record high or low mean air temperature during February.

Extremely high dew point temperatures (a measure of humidity) were reported on 2 February across the upper North Island, many of which were the highest for several years or longer. The 25°C dew point reported at Whenuapai was the highest dew point at an Auckland station since at least 1972. A second period of similarly high dew point values occurred around 13 February. Both of these situations relied on the air mass source being over the large marine heatwave region to the northeast of the country.

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

Location	Mean air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Motu	17.7	1.6	1990	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Winchmore	14.0	-2.3	1949	2nd-lowest
Waipounamu	13.7	-0.9	1980	2nd-lowest
Diamond Harbour	16.1	-0.9	2004	3rd-lowest
Pukaki	14.7	-1.5	1972	4th-lowest

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

Location	Mean maximum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Motu	23.3	2.1	1990	2nd-highest
Whakatāne	25.9	1.2	1974	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Waipounamu	20.0	-0.5	1980	4th-lowest

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

Location	Mean minimum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
None observed				
Low records or near-records				
Diamond Harbour	12.2	-0.6	2004	Lowest
Waipounamu	7.4	-1.2	1980	Lowest

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.

Winchmore	8.4	-2.0	1949	2nd-lowest
Christchurch (Riccarton)	11.2	-1.3	2002	4th-lowest
Middlemarch	7.0	-1.1	2000	4th-lowest
Clyde	8.2	-1.2	1978	4th-lowest

Rainfall: Record rain in Banks Peninsula

Rainfall in February 2026 was dominated by the “Valentine’s Storm” (14th-16th February). A rare red warning for heavy rain was issued for the central North Island, with heavy rain also affecting eastern parts of both islands as the low slowly moved southwards. Banks Peninsula was particularly seriously affected on the South Island. Akaroa recorded its wettest day on record (243 mm), with records dating back to 1977. The top three wettest days in Akaroa have now all occurred since 2023.

An earlier low-pressure system also affected the country in the first few days of the month, bringing heavy rain to eastern areas. Masterton recorded an hourly rainfall of 37 mm on the evening of 3 February, which was their second highest hourly rainfall on record since 2009.

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

Location	Rainfall total (mm)	Percentage of normal	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Akaroa	363	688	1977	Highest
Le Bons Bay	151	423	1984	2nd-highest
Masterton	173	357	1926	3rd-highest
Waiouru	129	215	1950	3rd-highest
Mokohinau Island	135	236	1994	4th-highest
Christchurch (Riccarton)	90	239	2002	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

February climate in the six main centres

Temperatures for the six main centres were mostly near average, however both Wellington and Christchurch reported below average temperatures, especially notably so in Christchurch. Rainfall was below normal or well below normal for Auckland and Tauranga – a dramatic change from January for both cities. Meanwhile rainfall was near normal in Hamilton. Above normal rainfall was recorded in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Of the six main centres, Tauranga was the sunniest, Auckland was the driest and warmest, Wellington was the wettest, and Dunedin was the coolest and least sunny.

February 2026 main centre climate statistics:

Temperature			
Location	Mean temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Comments
Auckland ^a	20.7	+0.2	Near average
Tauranga ^b	20.4	+0.3	Near average
Hamilton ^c	18.7	-0.4	Near average
Wellington ^d	16.7	-0.6	Below average (Coolest since 2012)
Christchurch ^e	15.8	-1.1	Below average (Coolest since 2002)
Dunedin ^f	14.8	-0.3	Near average
Rainfall			
Location	Rainfall (mm)	% of normal	Comments
Auckland ^a	18	32	Well below normal
Tauranga ^b	61	73	Below normal
Hamilton ^c	69	95	Near normal
Wellington ^d	122	220	Well above normal
Christchurch ^e	66	166	Well above normal
Dunedin ^f	101	144	Above normal
Sunshine			
Location	Sunshine (hours)		
Auckland ^a	225		
Tauranga ^b	237		
Hamilton ^g	212		
Wellington ^d	205		
Christchurch ^e	211		
Dunedin ^f	198		

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

Highlights and extreme events

Temperatures

The highest temperature was 33.6°C, observed at Hastings on 2 February.

The lowest temperature was -0.7°C at Waipara River North Branch on 28 February.

The month was notable for the absence of very hot days, and no high temperature records were set on mainland New Zealand. It is now 15 years since New Zealand last recorded a temperature above 40°C.

Cold maximum temperatures occurred in two distinct periods this month – both in the wake of the passing low pressure systems (3 February, then again 15-16 February), as cold air moved up the country in the southerlies on the western flank of these depressions.

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

Location	Extreme maximum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Whakatāne	31.8	8th	1975	3rd-highest
Brothers Island	25.4	11th	1997	3rd-highest
Motu	29.6	7th	1990	Equal 3rd-highest
Low records or near-records				
Waikeria	17.5	15th	1972	2nd-lowest
Waiouru	9.4	15th	1972	2nd-lowest
Diamond Harbour	12.5	16th	2004	2nd-lowest
Waipara West	12.3	3rd	1973	3rd-lowest
Akaroa	12.9	3rd	1978	3rd-lowest
Castlepoint	14.0	27th	1972	Equal 3rd-lowest
Brothers Island	14.4	3rd	1997	Equal 3rd-lowest
Mt Ruapehu, Chateau	9.8	16th	2000	4th-lowest
Christchurch (Riccarton)	13.9	16th	2002	4th-lowest
Orari	11.5	3rd	1972	4th-lowest

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

Location	Extreme minimum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
Low records or near-records				
Waipounamu	0.0	14th	1980	Lowest
Winchmore	1.8	28th	1949	Equal 3rd-lowest
High records or near-records				
Motu	18.8	3rd	1990	Equal highest
Gisborne	22.6	3rd	1940	3rd-highest
Matamata	20.4	13th	1999	Equal 4th-highest
Mt Ruapehu, Chateau	15.3	14th	2000	4th-highest

Rain, flooding, and slips

The Valentine's storm led to five North Island districts (Manawatū, Rangitikei, Taranaki, Waipā and Ōtorohanga) entering States of Emergency, followed by Banks Peninsula Ward on the South Island.

This storm combined both notable strong winds and heavy rain, often simultaneously, leading to fallen trees and slips which disrupted transport across the central, eastern and lower North Island. All trains in Wellington were cancelled, and the State Highway network across the central North Island was impacted, with multiple concurrent closures occurring during and after the storm.

In the South Island, the Heathcote River burst its banks in Christchurch. Flooding in Little River was considered by local authorities to be the worst in at least 30 years.

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

Location	Extreme 1-day rainfall (mm)	Date of extreme rainfall	Year records began	Comments
Mokohinau Island	109	13th	1994	Highest
Akaroa	243	16th	1977	Highest
Le Bons Bay	80	16th	1984	Highest
Christchurch (Riccarton)	55	16th	2002	2nd-highest
Waikeria	120	13th	1921	2nd-highest
Masterton	83	3rd	1926	3rd-highest
Castlepoint	145	15th	1907	3rd-highest
Mahia	70	14th	1990	3rd-highest
Waiouru	65	15th	1950	3rd-highest

Wind

The highest wind gust was 241 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 16 February. This location is known for its strong winds, but this was still the strongest southwesterly wind gust on record there, since 2008. The top three strongest wind gusts at this location have all occurred since 2023 (September 2023, October 2025, February 2026).

This storm also produced notable wind gusts for other eastern locations, and in the lower North Island. For the Wellington region, it was the worst southerly storm since June 2013. 25,000 properties were without power in the PowerCo region in the lower North Island, and 15,000 in the Wellington region.

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

Location	Extreme wind gust (km/h)	Date of extreme gust	Year records began	Comments
Takapau Plains	107	16th	2005	Highest
Castlepoint	176	16th	1972	Highest
Māhia	102	16th	1991	Highest
Mana Island	143	16th	2005	Highest
Clyde	80	7th	1983	Highest
Wellington (Airport)	128	16th	1972	2nd-highest
Upper Hutt, Trentham	103	15th	1999	2nd-highest

Whanganui	111	16th	1977	2nd-highest
Cape Campbell	130	15th	1963	2nd-highest
Auckland (Western Springs)	76	15th	1994	3rd-highest
Stratford	79	15th	2002	3rd-highest
Whanganui	108	16th	1977	3rd-highest
Brothers Island	152	15th	1997	3rd-highest
Turangi	82	16th	1973	4th-highest
Dannevirke	78	20th	1961	4th-highest
Whakatu	71	16th	1997	4th-highest
Hawera	93	15th	1986	4th-highest
Mt Cook (Airport)	128	13th	2000	4th-highest

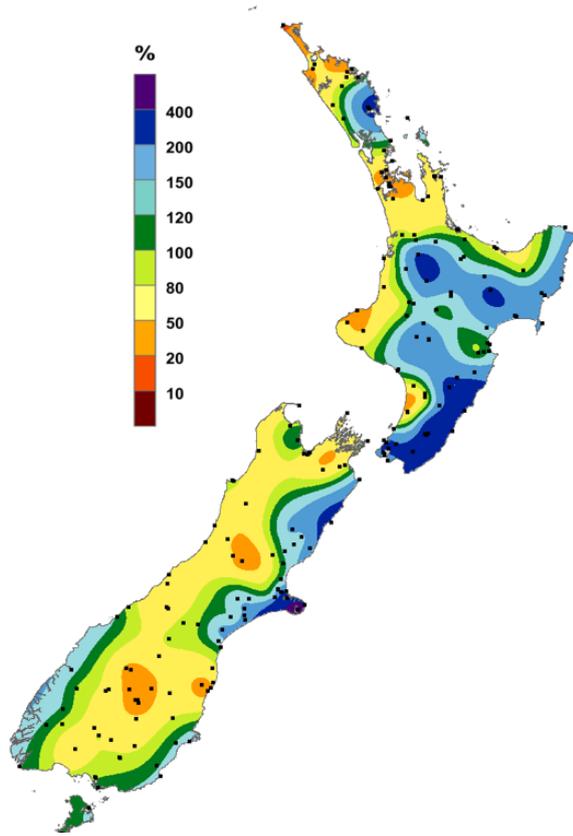
Lightning, hail, and tornadoes

On 13 February, numerous severe thunderstorms were observed in the upper North Island as a humid unstable air mass moved onto the country ahead of the developing low.

For further information, please contact:

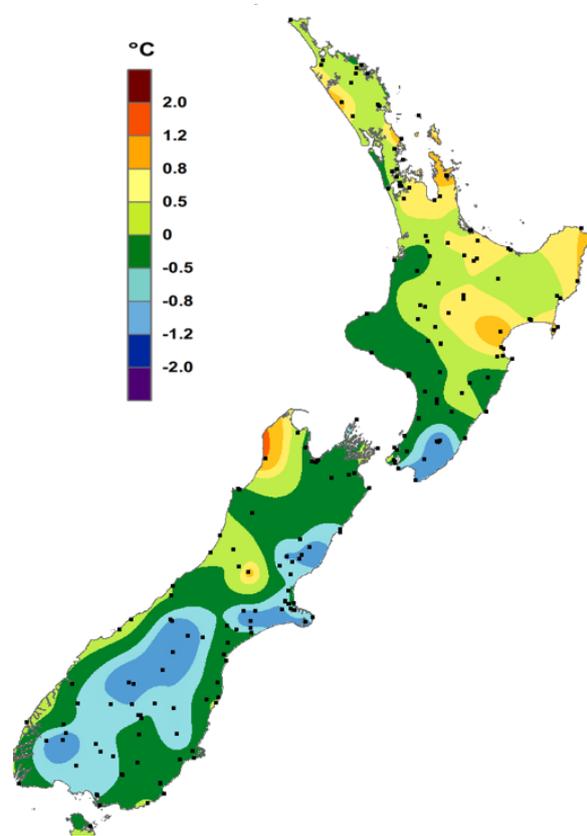
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February rainfall

Expressed as a percentage of the 1991-2020 normal.



February temperature

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

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

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