



Large parts of England and Wales are on flood alert after heavy rain – plus snow and hail – swept across the UK over the weekend. On Monday morning 16 flood warnings – meaning flooding is expected and immediate action is needed – were in place: six in the south-west of England, five in the Anglian region and three in the Midlands.

In addition the Environment Agency published more than 70 flood alerts, meaning flooding is possible, almost half of them in the south-east of England.

Last week the agency said the unusually wet summer could lead to flooding this winter. Rivers remain full and the ground saturated so that only relatively small amounts of rain put homes and businesses at risk.

Craig Woolhouse, the Environment Agency's flood risk manager, said: "The Environment Agency has issued a number of flood warnings and alerts as a result of heavy rain across the south of England and Wales over this weekend.

"Only last week the organisation warned that flooding could be more likely this winter as a result of heavy rainfall during the summer and higher than normal rivers and groundwater levels."

The worst of the weather over the weekend was focused on Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire as an area of low pressure moved north-east across the south of England.

On Sunday up to 25mm of rain fell in many areas with Bournemouth suffering the heaviest downpour – a very soggy 34mm. A Met Office spokesman said cold air from the north-east "dug into" the low pressure, causing snow to fall not just on the hills but on lower ground. Around 3cm of snow fell in parts of the south-west, triggering a couple of hours of sledging and cars slips-sliding on untreated roads.

But the rain rather than the snow caused most problems. Firefighters in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were called to seven separate incidents of people trapped in vehicles. One woman was stuck in her car when it was pushed on to its side in floodwater. In Carmarthenshire, west Wales, firefighters used a boat to rescue nine adults and six children from the Pendine caravan park.

On Monday morning the Met Office issued a severe weather warning for some areas of Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England after plunging temperatures made driving tricky.

More rain, hail and thunder are expected later on Monday in some coastal areas of England and Wales but in most places it is expected to be dry and, often, sunny. However for the moment the Met Office said it remained cold. The chilliest place overnight on Sunday was Shap in Cumbria, where the temperature dropped to -5C. The maximum temperature on Monday was likely to be just 10C – in London. Bonfire night was predicted to be clear but cold.

The weather is likely to be less dramatic as the week goes on with the Met Office predicting that it will get milder but cloudier.