Predictability of an intense precipitation event using the WRF model

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EMS2011-708-2

Objective

In the morning of February the 20th, 2010 an extreme precipitation event occurred over the Madeira Island. This event triggered several flash floods and mudslides in the southern parts of the island, resulting in the death of 42 people, 100 injured and at least 8 people are still missing.

In this study, the WRF model is used to evaluate the intensity and predictability of this event. The synoptic/ orographic nature of precipitation is also evaluated, as well as the sensitivity of the model to horizontal resolution and cumulus parametrization.

Methodology

Numerical Weather Prediction Model
• WRF-ARW version 3.2 (Skamarock, 2008)
Forcing fields
• NCEP’s Global Forecast System (GFS)
Model Configuration
• Highly resolved domain is centered in Madeira Island
• D1: 25 km D2: 5 km D3: 1 km resolution
• Dudhia shortwave radiation
• Rapid Radiative Transfer Model for longwave
• Yonsei University (YSU) PBL scheme
• the Noah Land Surface Model
• Kain-Fritsch convective parameterization scheme
• 28 Vertical levels

Error Measurements:

BIAS

Root Mean Square Error

Root Mean Square Error without cte. bias

Standard deviation

Model skill high when:

\[ E = \frac{\sum (x - y)^2}{N} \]

Final Remarks

• There was predictability up to three days before the event, mainly dictated by the quality of initial and boundary conditions supplied by the GFS global forecast
• Daily total precipitation is not well simulated by runs which started more than 12 h before the peak precipitation.
• Hourly local precipitation, namely its amplitude and phase, is well simulated only when simulations are initialized 12 h before the event.
• The precipitation resulted from southern flow lifting imposed by Madeira’s topography, affecting mainly the center and southern parts of the Island.
• S. Jorge showed few discrepancies, maybe due to microphysics being the dominant process producing the precipitation.
• P. Porto showed the biggest discrepancy, which could be related to its location which, in turn, could be misrepresented in the model, where landuse is water and the altitude of the station is 300 m above sea level.

Acknowledgments:
João Ferreira and João Sousa gratefully acknowledge their PhD grants SFRH/Bd/31465/2006 and SFRH/Bd/64515/2009 to Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia