

Avalanche Advisory for Wednesday, February 18, 2015

Expires tonight at 12:00 midnight

Tuckerman Ravine has Moderate and Low avalanche danger. The Sluice, Lip, Center Bowl, and Chute have Moderate avalanche danger. Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible. All other forecast areas have Low avalanche danger. Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Watch for unstable snow in isolated terrain features.

All forecast areas of Huntington Ravine have Low avalanche danger. Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Watch for unstable snow in isolated terrain features.

AVALANCHE PROBLEM: Wind slabs are the problem you're most likely to see today. In Tuckerman, the Moderate-rated areas have firm, strong wind slab that will be resistant to human impacts, though the possibility exists that you'll find a weak spot in the slab. Although the likelihood is somewhere between possible and unlikely, the resulting avalanche could be a very large and destructive. Other areas, including many rated Low danger, may hold smaller pockets of firm slab that do not have quite as much strength and an unlucky climber could still trigger it even in Low danger. With a small amount of new snow, there is also the chance that fresher, much softer wind slabs will form late in the day.

WEATHER: There is not a lot to say about today's weather. If every day were like today, life on Mt. Washington would be pretty boring. Expect light winds, fair skies turning to overcast, and seasonable temperatures. Thankfully, this afternoon we are expecting some light snow to begin. This will intensify overnight and hopefully leave us with modestly significant accumulations by Thursday.

SNOWPACK: A trip into Tuckerman yesterday confirmed what we believed to be the situation around the ravine, and even gave us enough information to drop a couple forecast areas from Moderate to Low danger. The very strong winds early in the week laid a beat down on the snowpack. Avalanche activity was widespread in Tuckerman, likely Sunday night through Monday morning. Lobster Claw, Right Gully, the Sluice, and the Chute all avalanched during this time. What is left behind is a very strong and thick slab from Sluice through Chute. Although it has a lot of strength and the chances of a gently traveling person impacting it enough to cause it to release are on the lower end, the consequences of the potential avalanche are great enough to warrant a Moderate danger rating. Believe me, you don't want to trigger the Lip and Center Bowl today.

The areas rated Low have been subjected to avalanches and wind-hammering effects. Some of the resulting surfaces are great for cramponing, while others are icy bed surfaces from prior avalanche activity, and others are thin breakable crusts. You will still want to be aware of the potential for smaller pockets of unstable snow. Low danger does not mean you should leave the beacon, shovel, and probe in the car. Come with an understanding of the hazard and you can be rewarded with good climbing conditions. The ski conditions are not ideal; generally when you want crampons for climbing the snow is firm enough that descending on skis or boards can be a harrowing proposition for even the hardest New England skier.

Please Remember:

- Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This advisory is just one tool to help you make your own decisions in avalanche terrain. You control your own risk by choosing where, when, and how you travel.
- Anticipate a changing avalanche danger when actual weather differs from the higher summits forecast. For more information contact the Forest Service Snow Rangers, the AMC at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center, or the caretakers at Hermit Lake Shelters or the Harvard Cabin.
- **Posted 7:30a.m. Wednesday, February 18, 2015. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

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