

# Avalanche Advisory for Sunday, March 01, 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 in these locations.

**Huntington Ravine has Low avalanche danger.** Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely.

**AVALANCHE PROBLEM: Persistent Slabs** are the primary threat again today. You'll find this in the Moderate rated areas of Tuckerman. Numerous layers at varying depths have the potential to release as large hard slab avalanches. Areas rated at Low danger generally have been scoured clean of any new slab, leaving behind firm and stable snow. Although these locations do not have superb skiing or riding conditions, they pose much less risk than slopes rated Moderate.

New snow is expected to begin this afternoon. If you are on the mountain well after dark, avalanche danger may increase above today's ratings due to the development of fresh wind slabs.

**WEATHER:** High elevation clouds have already begun to appear and these will thicken and lower through the day. We are expecting a light snowfall across the area tonight, with upslope enhancement in the mountains adding to the total amounts. You can expect 1-2" in the valleys, but in the mountains possibly 2-4" by tomorrow morning with additional upsloping snowfall during the day Monday. For today, winds will be generally from the west and increasing to 35-50mph.

**SNOWPACK:** Areas rated Low are pretty easy to describe...they are firm older snow that has been scoured or wind-packed into a very stable surface. As mentioned, this may not provide the best skiing you've ever experienced. I'd recommend crampons and an ice axe or whippet for the ascents, and that should say something about the snow quality. But as many people yesterday learned, the snow is firm but not icy in these areas.

Locations rated Moderate will force you to either a) ignore the fact that avalanches can cause serious injury or death, or b) calculate a risk vs benefit analysis for the snow you want to get onto. I watched yesterday as a couple people chose "option a." One skied the Lip without any firsthand info about the snow in this area. The other watched as I dug a pit and made my decision to not ride the slope, then he skied it anyway. For me, and hopefully for you as well, you will recognize that the slabs in Moderate rated areas fit the "low probability-high consequence" description. This type of snowpack is difficult for a person to trigger—at least you might think so right up until the point when it releases, then you might think otherwise. Most likely trigger points will be locations where the slabs are relatively thin, such as near buried rocks, under areas that had previous avalanche activity, or near the edges where the wind slabs taper down. In your risk-benefit analysis, know that if you trigger an avalanche, it will probably be a high consequence large hard slab avalanche. Your reward for taking the risk will be a couple inches of softer snow on top of 1F-Pencil hard slab. For me yesterday, the reward was not great enough to warrant taking the risk. Do your own stability assessments of the snow you want to experience, and make informed decisions.

## 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 8:15 a.m. Sunday, March 01, 2015. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

