

Avalanche Advisory for Monday, March 24, 2014

Expires tonight at 12:00 midnight

All forecast areas of Tuckerman and Huntington Ravines have MODERATE avalanche danger today. Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible. Large avalanches may occur in specific areas. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully. The only exception to this is the Little Headwall which has Low avalanche danger. Human triggered avalanches are unlikely except in isolated terrain features.

AVALANCHE PROBLEM: Wind slab is the primary avalanche problem today. Over the last several days, there has been a lot of wind-transported snow which has created dangerous wind slabs across most of Tuckerman and Huntington. We are just coming down from days with High and Considerable avalanche danger. Depending on where you travel today, you may encounter some areas at the upper end of Moderate based on the likelihood of triggering an avalanche. These locations are also capable of producing large avalanches, so pay close attention to your terrain choices. Being in the flat or low-angled terrain below any avalanche path is a bad place to be if it were to be triggered from above.

WEATHER: Two years ago today, the summit temperature maxed out at +40F (4.5C) during a heat wave. This morning it is -15F at the summit and just below 0F at Hermit Lake. Despite the sunshine, this is a cold winter day. For those who haven't been paying attention, in the last 5 days, the summit of Mt. Washington has reported 25.5" of new snow.

SNOWPACK: The most impressive thing that stands out this morning is how bloated some forecast areas have become. The amount of wind loading has been very impressive. For example, the rock and ice cliff that has marked the skier's right edge of the Lip throughout this season is now completely buried under new wind slab, and the ice cliffs that mark the left side are almost gone as well. This bodes well for spring skiing later this season, but very badly for anyone who happens to trigger this slope in the near-term. There is a tremendous amount of slab loaded onto a 50 degree slope. I don't think it will release on its own today—I think someone would need to travel through there to trigger this path.

Many locations were wind-affected overnight and may have some reasonable travel options for people who are capable of assessing the snowpack and mitigating avalanche hazard with good terrain management skills. Of course, you'd also need to be willing to turn back if you don't like what you're seeing in the snowpack. Those savvy travelers who fit this description will have an easy enough time visually figuring out which areas might have good enough stability to venture into. Be honest with yourself and your partners when figuring out if the risk is something you are comfortable with. I will say that the **Sluice through Chute is the area of greatest concern. They do not offer good options for terrain management and are the most deeply loaded slopes.**

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 8:20a.m. Monday, March 24, 2014. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

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