

# Avalanche Advisory for Tuesday, December 30, 2014

**Expires tonight at 12:00 midnight**

**All forecast areas of Tuckerman and Huntington Ravines have Low avalanche danger.** Natural avalanches are very unlikely and human triggered avalanches are unlikely except in isolated terrain features. Unstable snow may exist in isolated terrain features – use caution in these locations.

**AVALANCHE PROBLEM:** Avalanche problems today are limited to small pockets of **wind slab** that developed over the past couple days. In both ravines, the overall snowpack is looking rather sparse for the end of December. This means the locations where you may find unstable slab are relatively small and isolated from other areas of snow. This does not mean they are “safe” or that you should leave the beacon, shovel, and probe down in the car. In fact, given the consequences of a fall in the current conditions, any small pocket of unstable snow will be quite dangerous. On the whole, there is a lot of stable snow out there, but don’t let your guard down.

**WEATHER:** Today is going to be a sunny day on the mountain, albeit cold and windy. I don’t expect today’s winds to have much of an effect on the avalanche conditions. The snow that landed at upper elevations two days ago has largely reached its final destination already, or at least until we see a significant jump in wind speeds. **If you are out in the Presidentials today, even just for a hike, be prepared for arctic conditions and gusty winds. Cover up exposed skin!**

**SNOWPACK:** We had been watching the weather closely over the last couple days, mostly because cloud cover on the mountain meant that was all we could see. Yesterday afternoon the clouds broke and Frank and I were able to get into both ravines to see what happened with the 5” of snow that fell on the summit Sunday and was followed by very strong winds. Much to our dismay, it did not appear as though 5” of snow had been loaded in. This could be due to a variety of factors, but the result is the same. We saw areas of old crust, areas of wind-hammered snow, and occasional pockets of slab with a weak layer of unconsolidated snow between the slab and the crust. These pockets were found only in very strong lee areas that were well protected from winds. If there are avalanche concerns out there today, they will be in these isolated pockets. Your best bet for finding them would be in the Lip (where the Tuckerman Ravine Trail crosses above the waterfall), under the ice in the Center Bowl, or perhaps in the middle section of Central Gully. Other locations may also harbor this problem, so keep your eyes open as you travel about, but generally you’ll be traveling through snow with good stability.

In other news, the Lion Head Summer Trail remains open and will be the preferred route until we get significantly more snow. The trail does cross an avalanche path in a couple locations, but there needs to be a lot more snow before this becomes a problem. The John Sherburne Ski Trail has fair coverage but is very hard-packed and icy. There are a lot of very abrupt waterbars, open patches of frozen turf, and some water ice. Extreme optimists say it’s still better than walking down, but you may disagree long before you reach the bottom. And finally, we will be resuming the Eastern Snow and Avalanche Workshop (ESAW) Continuing Education Series this winter. The first session will be in mid-January. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for more details in the coming days.

## **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 8:10 a.m. Tuesday, December 30, 2014. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

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