

Avalanche Advisory for Tuesday, February 02, 2016

Expires tonight at 12:00 midnight

All forecast areas of Tuckerman and Huntington Ravines have Low avalanche danger. Generally safe avalanche conditions exist, with natural and human-triggered avalanches unlikely today. Some areas are not forecasted due to a lack of snow cover. These are Lobster Claw, Lower Snowfields, and Little Headwall in Tuckerman and North, Damnation, Yale, and the Escape Hatch in Huntington.

AVALANCHE PROBLEM: The avalanche problem today is that we really don't have one. Temperatures soared well above freezing yesterday in the ravines, causing significant melting of the surface snow. This has since refrozen into an icy mass with very little to talk about related to stability problems. However, there is a serious threat today caused by dangerously icy conditions. If you venture into steep terrain, it would be a mistake to do so without an ice ax and crampons. While these tools are a critical component to keeping you safe, they still need to be used properly. Any fall in steep terrain today will result in very rapid downslope acceleration. Without much snow cover to smooth out the ride down, it's almost certain to be a painful, bumpy ride.

WEATHER: As far as the weather goes, today looks like it will be a pleasant day in the mountains. Clearing skies and decreasing wind velocities combine with reasonable temperatures today. Yesterday, the summit of Washington sat at 34F (+2C) for several hours in the early morning before cooling off earlier than expected during the daytime.

Precipitation is expected tomorrow, which will have the potential to affect avalanche danger. This weather system is expected to bring up to 1" (2.5cm) of liquid equivalent to the region. Unfortunately, it will be a situation with overrunning warm air eventually leading to rain in lower elevations and wintry mixes up high. We may see a fair amount of snow if temperatures stay colder longer than expected, but I wouldn't hang my hat on this scenario.

SNOWPACK: As mentioned, the surface snowpack is dominated by a slick icy layer caused by yesterday's warming and refreeze. How far down the heat was able to penetrate remains to be seen, but I suspect you'll be able to find some cold layers not too much deeper down which were able to remain dry. I don't think any buried weak layers will be a factor related to stability today, as the crust above will be quite strong.

The Lion Head Winter Route is open and is the recommended trail to the summit. This is a steep mountaineering route. Microspikes and ski poles are helpful on lower elevation trails, but are not substitutes for crampons and an ice axe on this route. **The John Sherburne Ski Trail**...if you are looking to not hike down, sure, it's an alternative. If you want fun skiing or riding, go elsewhere, the Sherburne is in very rough shape.

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., February 2, 2016. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

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