

Avalanche Advisory for Saturday, March 31, 2018

Expires tonight at 12:00 midnight

Huntington and Tuckerman Ravine have LOW avalanche danger today. All forecast areas have Low avalanche danger. Generally safe avalanche conditions exist.

AVALANCHE PROBLEM: Due to the melt-freeze cycle the mountain experienced over the past 48 hours, avalanche concerns have subsided for the day. A big drop in temperature following $\frac{3}{4}$ " of rain has locked the surface of the snowpack and left avalanche terrain with a smooth, icy surface. **Long, sliding falls** will be the main concern today for skiers and climbers and will necessitate the skillful use of crampons and ice axes. In addition to this, other spring hazards are starting to appear, though weather today should prevent further development of undermined snow and keep most rock and ice in place rather than cascading down. Climbers should be wary of ice dams as the cold snap will have trapped running water under a coating of ice that is waiting for pressure release in the form of a tool or screw placement. The Little Headwall is now open water and not recommended as an exit for those looking to ski out of Tuckerman Ravine.

WEATHER: On Thursday morning, the summit of Mount Washington recorded above freezing temperatures that stayed above 32F for 30 hours. During this time period, the summit also recorded 0.75" of rain. At noon on Friday, temperatures began a downward trend that bottomed out at a current 3F on the summit and 14F at Hermit Lake. As today progresses, a ridge of high pressure over the region will keep skies clear until late in the day when upper level moisture will bring clouds in the evening. Temperature will be colder than it looks today with highs on the summit maybe reaching 20F by early afternoon. Wind is currently out of the NW at 65mph and will shift to the SW as high pressure moves out of the region late in the day. Wind speeds should drop to the 30-45mph midday and then increase again when the wind shifts to the SW.

SNOWPACK: As expected, our snowpack took a hit from yesterday's rain. There is significantly less snow in the tops of gullies than earlier in the week. That being said, due to the porosity of the snow that arrived in early March, the snowpack was able to accept the rain well and we saw no drastic changes beyond the Little Headwall opening up. Today certainly has the appearance of spring, though those stepping out of their cars in the Pinkham parking lot at 7am might beg to differ. During our morning forecasters meeting, we discussed whether we thought the snow would soften today. Despite a combined give or take 45 years of experience, we struggled to say yes or no. If you are looking for spring skiing today, it might happen given the clear skies. That being said, cold temperatures and forecast wind speeds may prevent even south-facing slopes like Right Gully and Lobster Claw from softening. Wise skiers will carry crampons and an ice axe today and be prepared to down climb or wait and pray for the snow to soften.

The Sherburne still has full snow coverage from top to bottom, though ice is starting to appear in the usual places.

Tonight is the last night of operation for the Harvard Cabin, Starting tomorrow, the only place to camp in the Cutler River Drainage will be at Hermit Lake Shelters.

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 8:00a.m., Saturday, March 31, 2018. A new advisory will be issued tomorrow.**

Helon Hoffer, Snow Ranger
USDA Forest Service
White Mountain National Forest