

General Bulletin for Tuckerman and Huntington Ravines

A new bulletin will be issued 2-3 times per week or when conditions warrant.

We are no longer issuing avalanche danger ratings this season for Tuckerman and Huntington Ravine. However, we will continue to provide snowpack and weather information for these areas. Avalanches, falling rocks and ice, undermined snow, large glide cracks, and icy refrozen surfaces will remain a threat in and below steep terrain as long as snow remains in the mountains. Spring weather brings about rapid changes to the snowpack and presents objective hazards accordingly. Remember to ski, climb, or hike the snowpack and weather conditions that exist and not a date on the calendar!

Over two inches of rain and temperatures into the 40's and 50's over the past two days in the Ravines has consolidated the snow but has done little damage to the ski gullies in Tuckerman Ravine. A few lines such as the skier's right fork of Hillman's have shrunk into the barely skiable category but the Lip and most of the other main lines are still full with snow. Glide cracks are just beginning to emerge. Huntington's ice climbs were damaged but still passable, though continued warm weather will make these increasingly sketchy due to undermining of the remaining ice and loose rocky topouts. The weather forecast is continuing to favor those with flexible work schedules and punish the 9-5ers. Rain will return Friday night and in the words of today's MWObs forecaster "plague" the area through the weekend with rain shower activity. Warm temperatures remain in place through early Sunday which means flowing water and weak snow bridges will remain a problem especially in main watercourses. Periods of freezing temperatures may return briefly late Saturday night and more certainly Sunday afternoon and elevate the potential for slide-for-life conditions.

Remember to keep the following hazards in mind as you plan your route:

- **Icefall:** Over the years many people have been severely injured or killed by falling ice in Tuckerman. The most hazardous locations are in the center and right side of the ravine, including Lunch Rocks, the Sluice, Lip, and Center Bowl. Warm weather and rain increase the potential for icefall to occur. There is a lot of ice hanging on the cliffs in the Sluice and the Headwall. Avoid spending time in high risk areas like Lunch Rocks or on the floor of the ravine in the fall line of ice in the headwall.
- **Glide cracks and waterfall holes:** As the snowpack gradually gives way to gravity and creeps downhill, it pulls away from cliffs and leaves gaps. These gaps are the horizontal cracks that will soon appear in the steep terrain, most noticeably in the Lip. These are deep enough to cause fatal injuries, especially around the main waterfall. This waterfall hole in the Lip is a unique hazard. In addition to creating a fall hazard, the flowing water has spawned large and destructive wet slab avalanches in the past.
- **Undermined snow:** Meltwater flowing under the snowpack melts away the snow above, creating thin bridges of snow that can collapse. These are beginning to emerge at the tops of gullies (particularly on south-facing slopes) and in areas that have streams running, like the brook feeding the Little Headwall. The sound of running water can sometimes be heard under the snow and is a good indicator of this hazard. Breaking through weak snow into one of the larger water courses could be fatal if you become trapped.
- **Long, sliding falls:** Part of what makes spring skiing so great is the melt/freeze cycle that creates stable, firm corn snow. The cycle begins when the snowpack freezes at night or in the afternoon shade on cooler days. This refreeze creates a hard surface on which it is nearly impossible to arrest a fall with skis or an ice axe. Refrozen snow can cause trouble for those looking to get "just one more run" at the end of the day.

Though icy, the Winter Lion Head Route remains the preferred option for summit hikers due to the fall hazard at the traverse near treeline on the summer trail. The lower section of the Sherburne Ski Trail is closed around the switchbacks of the Tuckerman Ravine trail, about ½ mile or 400+ vertical feet from the parking lot. In order to reduce erosion on the ski trail, please walk over to the Tucks trail and hike the rest of the way to Pinkham Notch.

Please Remember:

- Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This bulletin 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 Mount Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol, the AMC at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center, or the caretakers at Hermit Lake Shelters.
- **Posted 8:15 a.m., Friday, April 27, 2018. A new bulletin will be issued when conditions warrant.**