MOUNT WASHINGTON AVALANCHE CENTER

Avalanche Forecast for Friday, January 18, 2019

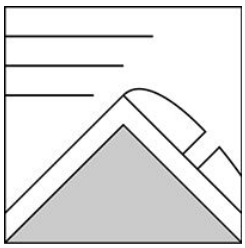
The Bottom Line

The recipe for small wind slabs is on the table today with a ripe wind direction and speed for loading. However, it's likely we will lack the snow which serves as the crucial ingredient, at least during daylight hours, to build those slabs. If you are out climbing (recommended) or skiing (not so much) bring your crampons for the rugged, hard snow and keep an eye on the weather, especially later in the day. Overall stable conditions today, even with a small amount of new snow, should keep us at a LOW danger rating today. If we receive the upper end of the forecasted 1-3" of snow, the potential for small, human-triggered avalanches may exceed that rating, especially as evening approaches.

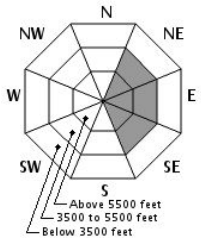
Mountain Weather

Low tide conditions continue with no new snow recorded in the past 24 hours around the range. Summit temperature at 6 am is 0F with wind from the southwest near 40 mph. A weak cold front will pass through this afternoon and bring snow shower activity with it. Accumulations should be light, with forecasts ranging from one inch up to three inches. Wind will shift west and ramp up into the 45-60 mph range in the afternoon. Dry air in place and limited moisture in the system seem likely to keep snow accumulations low. Temperatures will fall again tonight to near -10F with wind remaining from the northwest in the 40-55 mph range. After a fairly calm but seasonably cold day tomorrow, a significant winter storm arrives in the evening with temperatures staying quite cold through the storm. Low density snow will likely create challenging conditions for a number of reasons with "postholing" through thigh-deep snow, even with snowshoes, being among them.

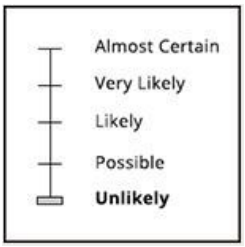
Primary Avalanche Problem



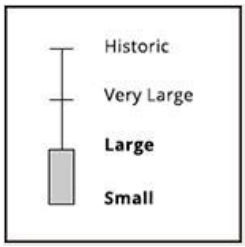
Wind Slab



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Wind slabs have been unreactive for several days now bringing generally safe avalanche conditions to the range. Some pockets of softer snow exist but also seem to present generally stable conditions. The possibility of finding and triggering a thin spot in a hard wind slab resting on the ice crust is unlikely but not impossible. New wind slabs could develop late in the day, especially if we receive 3" of new snow.

Snowpack Observations

Remnants of the 1.5" of snow that fell Wednesday and developed small but softer wind slabs are scattered around in the most sheltered locations of the terrain. Overall, the snow surface in avalanche paths is dominated by thick hard wind slabs or avalanche debris from the widespread January 10/11 avalanche cycle. Facets have been observed around the ice crust under the hard wind slabs that remain, though triggering these tough slabs remains unlikely. The incoming snowstorm will be greeted by fully developed avalanche paths, at least in the eastern half of the compass rose. This includes slopes and gullies with a more south-easterly aspect.

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Please Remember: Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This forecast is just one of many decision making tools. You control your own risk by choosing where, when, and how you travel. Understand that the avalanche danger may change when actual weather differs from the weather 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 at the Harvard Cabin.