

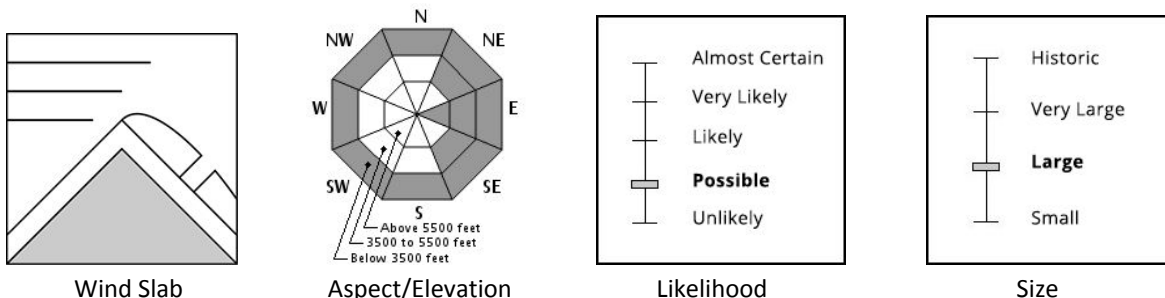
**The Bottom Line**

The snowpack on Mount Washington is no stranger to high wind events but the past two days were a little unusual. The record setting high wind speeds which would ordinarily strip and scour most of the snow from our terrain was accompanied by moderate snowfall which deposited more snow than expected, in our east facing terrain anyway. A brief window of visibility and moderating wind speeds yesterday revealed sizable, smooth wind slabs deposited almost all the way to the tops of gullies (except the Northern gullies). A brief view of Boott Spur confirmed the notion that wind slabs developed during what could have been a scouring event. Expect wind slabs to exist lower in start zones in terrain to the lee of a west wind. MODERATE avalanche danger exists with human-triggered avalanches possible on recently wind loaded slopes. Lower elevation areas may contain more reactive and softer wind slabs.

**Mountain Weather**

No new snow in the past 24 hours following the 25cm that was recorded at Hermit Lake through this storm and subsequent lake effect snowfall. Streamers of moisture from the Great Lakes added to our more typical up-slope enhanced snow and the initial storm on Monday to deposit one and a half inches of SWE on the summit. Yesterday, precipitation wound down while wind continued from the WNW in the 70-90 mph range. Today, NW wind will diminish to 30-45 mph today with ambient air temperature rising to around -5F after a cold start. Current temperature is -18F, up from -27F earlier this morning, on the summit.

**Primary Avalanche Problem**



Wind slabs built during the recent snowfall and wind event are gaining strength slowly due to the cold temperatures. These wind slabs are likely to be stubborn to the point of being unreactive in the typical mid and upper elevation avalanche paths like Tucks and the Gulf of Slides but possibly more reactive than stubborn in the sheltered locations at lower elevations like the slides on Mount Webster. As with any firm wind slab, triggering often occurs at a thin spot in the slab and propagates through the thicker parts. The thin spot can be at the bottom edge of the slab such as we've seen near the floor of Tuckerman Ravine below the Headwall or over a submerged boulder.

**Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion**

Among the surprises for field observers yesterday was a 3' crown line on the north side of Raymond's Cataract. The Lower Snowfields also contained a refilled crown line beneath the rock slab below Dead End gully. Past high wind and snow events have a history of building wind slabs in Lower Snowfields and seems likely that you could find a similar loading pattern low on gullies and snowfields in Gulf of Slides and anywhere else in the range that has a large flat expanse (fetch) of snow available upwind of a steep open slope or gully. The other surprising field observation yesterday was the lack of old ice crust exposed. The February ice crust been exposed by wind in a number of places in east facing terrain despite 85cm (33") of snowfall (at Hermit Lake) since its development. The new snow associated with this wind event refilled the terrain nicely, at least on the east side.

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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.