

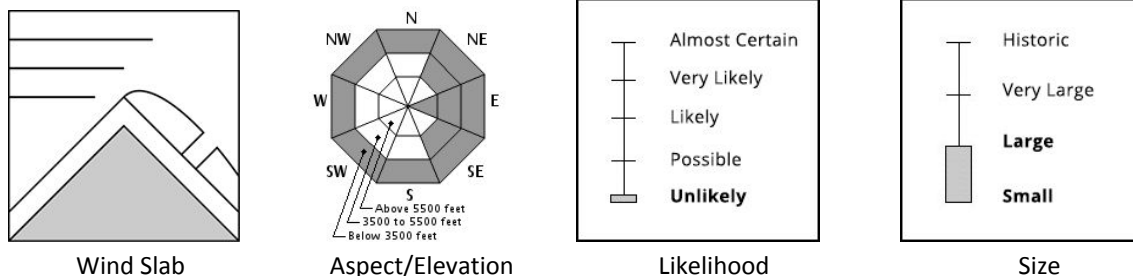
The Bottom Line

Wind slabs remain our primary avalanche problem today. LOW avalanche danger exists throughout the forecast area though the potential for small avalanches remains in isolated areas. Human triggered avalanches in these wind slabs are unlikely but not impossible. Normal precautions in your terrain management as well as in the gear that you carry is advised. The firm slabs in steep open terrain present a long sliding fall hazard so crampons, an ice axe, and an honest assessment of the consequences of a slip will also be useful today.

Mountain Weather

Around an inch of low density snow fell on the summit overnight and this morning on moderate (40's mph) summit winds from the WNW. Temperatures are starting in the single digits above zero and will rise to the teens on the summit and around freezing in Crawford Notch. Skies will clear and winds will diminish further today as high pressure passes by before tonight's storm. Snow will begin shortly after dark tonight. Though most weather models show the low pressure tracking far enough off shore to keep snow totals on the modest side, between the storm and the upslope snow that follows we will have elevated avalanche danger tomorrow, especially as the west and northwest winds increase.

Primary Avalanche Problem



Wind slabs may also be found at lower elevation locations and have presented clean shears though no sign of propagation has been evident since their formation in the extreme wind event on Feb 25th. At mid elevation areas, most of these wind slabs are firm and unreactive. There have been multiple observations of an upside down snow structure, particularly at lower elevations or some wind sheltered locations, but with no reports of significant cracking or collapsing. Wind sheltered terrain may contain softer wind slabs that are more stubborn than unreactive, so be increasingly cautious where hollow sounding snow and steep terrain intersect.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Snow that fell at higher elevations last night, like the light snowfall on Wednesday night, is unlikely to improve skiing conditions. The softest snow is found either at lower elevations or wind sheltered areas. Snow coverage has improved on the west side with an avalanche observation in the main gully of the Ammo recently which helped to fill in and cover some obstacles. The snowpack there remains thin with open water and the typical terrain traps in place. Lots of lines have been skied this week throughout the range, though no huge, soft snow induced grins have been observed. Technical ski mountaineering with careful crampon and ice axe equipped ascents, followed by cautious, short radius turns on the way down paints a clearer picture of what's been happening. It's not even close to spring yet at any elevation with a dynamic snowpack that continues to demand respect. Crowds of people on the Lion Head winter route are being reported so factor in wait times on the steep sections into your itinerary or consider an alternate route.

Frank Carus, Lead Snow Ranger; USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest; (603)466-2713 TTY (603)466-2858

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.