

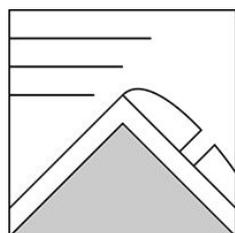
The Bottom Line

Snow that fell Saturday combined with increasing wind to create wind slabs that will be possible to trigger and could produce an avalanche large enough to fully bury a person. Cold temperatures have refrozen our previously wet snowpack, creating the potential for long, sliding falls today that make bringing an ice axe and crampons as important as avalanche rescue gear. If you find good skiing today, it means you are on a wind slab and in the the middle of today's avalanche problem. Further complicating travel today will be the glide cracks and moats that formed over the past week. New wind slabs will likely have covered some of these open holes in the snowpack, but not bridging the hazard, meaning they're now just hidden from view. With the trifecta of hazards in play today, keep terrain simple and realize that an avalanche today has more potential to result in harm than on a mid-winter snowpack.

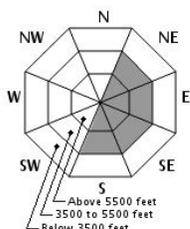
Mountain Weather

After a rainy start to the weekend, snowfall at high and mid elevations Saturday produced 2.3" at Hermit Lake, 4.3" at Gray Knob, and 3.8" on the summit. During the period of snowfall, wind started from the west at 30mph and increased to 70mph, still from the west. Currently, Sunday morning, wind direction is shifting to the NW and should decrease through the day. Cloudy skies should linger Sunday with a chance of snow, but visibility should improve. Temperatures should stay below freezing above 3500'. Monday looks to start with sunny skies and then develop clouds with ambient air temperatures staying below freezing. Tuesday and Wednesday will see a possible round of precipitation, though temperatures will be pushing toward the freezing mark.

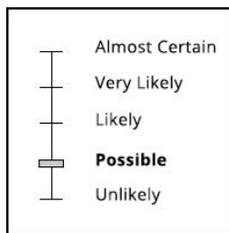
Primary Avalanche Problem



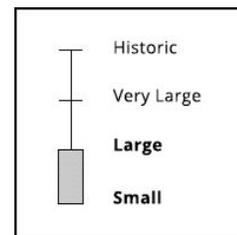
Wind Slab



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Wind slabs will be possible to trigger and in places have the potential to produce a large avalanche. Keep in mind that wind can transport snow very efficiently and we often see wind slabs 5 to 10 times thicker than the amount of snow that fell from the sky. These will thinly cover previously existing glide cracks and moats, hiding these holes from view but not providing any bridging over the underlying hazard.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Despite a snowpack laden with glide cracks, moats, and undermined snow, winter in the high country is not over yet. Significant melting over the past two weeks has allowed the multitude of springtime hazards to present more challenges to recreationalists than avalanche hazard. Below freezing temperatures at upper elevations will slow the rate of melting and reduce the likelihood of some hazards, but the following should play into travel decisions, particularly those which are now covered with newly formed wind slabs: Opening streams; Holes near trees, rocks, and cliffs; Undermined snow that could easily collapse; Glide cracks and moats on snow slopes; Waterfall holes; Falling ice and rock; Long, sliding falls. Currently, the Winter Lion Head route as well as areas of the snowpack that were scoured by the wind require crampons and an ice axe.

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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.