

The Bottom Line

The upcoming weekend will give folks another chance for spring skiing in the high country. Above freezing temperatures will soften most of the surface snow, though enough firm snow and ice will be around that crampons and ice axes could be useful additions to your pack if you're planning to ski in steep terrain. Forecast warm weather occurs annually and creates fairly predictable mountain hazards, though big surprises can also occur, such as the massive rockfall from Lion Head on Thursday. This event is a good reminder that low frequency, high consequence icefall and rockfall occur in our mountain range. The best way to reduce your risk to this hazard is to reduce your exposure time. As usual, Lunch Rocks is not a good place to hang out especially considering the easy option of sitting lower in the Bowl and out of the firing line. This simple step virtually eliminates the risk of being struck and wounded or killed by falling ice. The moats and waterfall holes continue to grow larger and deeper in the Headwall and Lip. These holes, along with those caused by undermined snow over streams, are deep enough, and cold and wet enough, to result in injury or death if you fall into one. Check out this account of one of the first skier deaths in the Lip that occurred 70 years ago, almost to the day. This weekend, Hillman's Highway, Left Gully as well as Right and Lobster Claw will likely yield good turns in softened old, gray snow with reduced hazards from icefall and waterfall holes. If you plan to ski in Tuckerman this weekend, remember that a conga line of skiers doesn't mean that a particular line is safe, it just means that human nature leads us to act as a herd sometimes. Make your own terrain choice and recognize that overhead hazards, such as falling snowboards or other skiers, are part of the constellation of hazards to consider as you choose your route.

Mountain Weather

Southwest flow will bring some rain later in the day Friday and into Saturday. High temperatures in the 40'sF with lows in the 30's are forecast for the rest of the weekend with light to moderate winds, mostly from the west and northwest. The potential for rain showers will persist under cloudy skies for most of the weekend. These showers could turn to snow showers Saturday night as temperatures drop at the highest elevations. No accumulations are expected and temperatures look as if they will rebound above freezing on the summit on Sunday.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The prolonged period of melt has opened deep cracks and holes in our snowpack, as flowing water undermined snow and opened some stream channels. Recent snow and wind slabs have settled into our isothermal snowpack. Areas of very icy snow have kept skiers on their toes, though the return of warming conditions should restore some degree of edgeability to the surface snow. Minor sluffing is possible and the resulting sluff channels may complicate descents. Keep the following hazards in mind as you make terrain decisions in our dynamic spring backcountry conditions:

- **Moats and other deep melt holes**
- **Waterfall holes**
- **Opening streams and undermined snow**
- **Glide cracks**
- **Falling ice and rock**
- **Avalanches**
- **Long sliding falls**

Steep snow and ice in gullies and trails, such as the Lion Head Winter Route, become very hard during any frozen periods in our spring melt/freeze cycles. This weekend, you'll find plenty of exposed ice mixed in with softer, rotten snow.

Currently, the Lion Head Winter Route as well as areas of the snowpack that have been scoured by wind are icy and require crampons and an ice axe to climb with security. The tops of many ski descents also fit this description.

The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails are no longer completely snow covered to Pinkham Notch. Expect ice, open stream crossings, rocks and bare patches. The lower 1/2 of the Sherburne is closed, with a rope directing skiers to the Tuckerman Ravine Trail. Cross over to the Tuckerman Ravine Trail at this point of your descent to prevent damage that results from walking on the muddy Sherburne trail. Please remove your skis and walk down the Tuckerman Ravine Trail to avoid collision with the many hikers on the trail.

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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.