

General Bulletin for Saturday, November 30, 2019

A new bulletin will be posted when conditions warrant and resources allow.

General Bulletins are issued when unstable snow may exist within our forecast areas but before 5-scale avalanche forecasts begin. We will start 5-scale forecasts on Wednesday, January 15. **Please remember that avalanches can and do occur before 5-scale avalanche forecasts are issued.**

Recent storms and wind loading have developed snowfields capable of producing avalanches. These snowfields, and the avalanches that occur on them, will continue to grow as cold weather and wind allow snow to fall and load into the terrain. One of the five classic red flags often used to determine avalanche danger is recent avalanche activity. A human-triggered avalanche on Friday, November 29 is a good reminder that avalanches can and do occur on smaller snowfields. New snow and wind-loading are two more of these red flags. As always, make careful assessments of snow and terrain on an ongoing basis.

The Tuckerman Ravine and Huntington Ravine trails are challenging climbs with significant avalanche hazard during winter. Both have been the scene of serious accidents where they pass through the steepest terrain of these Ravines. **The summer Lion Head Trail remains the safer choice for accessing the summit of Mount Washington from the east. As more snow falls and avalanche paths grow on the summer Lion Head trail, the Lion Head Winter Route will become the preferred route to the summit. Using the Lion Head Winter Route too early causes significant erosion and resource damage. An ice axe and crampons are currently needed at treeline and above.** The Sherburne ski trail has snow coverage to the parking lot though numerous water bars remain partly open. Most but certainly not all rocks are covered.

55" of snowfall has been recorded on the summit of Mount Washington during November. Currently, there's about 24" of snow on the ground at the wind-sheltered snow study plot near Hermit Lake. Over half of these snowfall totals fell during the last week of November. Though the bulk of the next winter storm, forecast for early in the first week of December, appears to be tracking to the south, you can expect enough new snow to fall in the Presidential range to increase the avalanche hazard on our growing avalanche paths. Be sure to check the MWOBS Higher Summits forecast as you plan your journey. Weather conditions change dramatically as you gain elevation so be prepared to turn back or change your objective when you observe nature's warning signs for avalanches. Plumes of snow at ridgetops and wind-blown sluffs are clear signs that slopes are being loaded and possibly primed for an avalanche.

Ice climbs are growing in size and pockets of unstable snow between ice pitches are notorious for causing problems. In addition to avalanche hazards, remember to take into account other early season hazards that exist in the terrain:

- **Rocks, trees and bushes** lurk in the snow and in the fall line. Skiing or sliding into obstacles can ruin your day or worse. New snow may just barely cover a season ending stump or boulder.
- **Terrain traps and cliffs** make burial and significant injury a real possibility, even if you are only swept off your feet by a small avalanche.

Please Remember:

- Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This bulletin is just one tool to help you make your own decisions in avalanche terrain. You control your own risk by choosing where, when, and how you travel.
- Anticipate the avalanche danger to change when actual weather differs from the higher summits 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.
- **Posted 7:25 a.m. November 30, 2019.**

