

General Bulletin, Tuesday, December 17, 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 conditions or available resources warrant 5-scale avalanche forecasts to begin. We will start 5-scale forecasts on Wednesday, January 15 or earlier, if possible. **Please remember that avalanches can and do occur before 5-scale avalanche forecasts are issued.**

New snow and wind loading over the next several days will combine to form wind slabs that may be sensitive to a human trigger as the new snow struggles to bond to the frozen bed surface resulting from the deep freeze after Saturday's warm rain.

Even a small avalanche can be deadly if it turns into a long sliding fall especially in an early season snow pack filled with rocks, trees and exposed cliffs. With up to 10" of new snow possible this week, newly formed wind slabs may be large enough to bury a person.

Safe traveling in and around avalanche terrain with this early season snow pack should include an extra dose of caution, keeping in mind the increased chance for bodily trauma will not be mitigated by your avalanche beacon and partners with shovels. Be continuously mindful of the terrain below you and objectively evaluate the consequences of a fall along your way. Get your crampons and axe out early, rope up before you think necessary, or look for ski terrain with a safe run-out.

Well over an inch of rain fell on across the Presidential range on Saturday, followed by a deep freeze creating a very hard frozen bed surface. A low pressure system on Tuesday followed by upslope snow showers at least into Wednesday brings the potential for up to 10" of new snow. Wind on Tuesday will be moderate by Mount Washington standards, under 30 mph as it shifts through the SE before wrapping back around to the NW on Wednesday and ramping up with gusts Wednesday night expected to top 100 mph. Strong winds and very cold temperatures Wednesday night through Friday will make any travel challenging especially above treeline.

In addition to avalanche hazards, be mindful of 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,** heightening the consequences of a fall or small avalanche.
- **Long sliding falls are a threat despite the appearance of new, soft snow on your approach.** Wind can easily scour parts of your climb or hike down to a hard bed surface. What you thought would be a mellow snow climb can turn into something much more exciting. Consider using a rope in third class terrain or sooner than normal due to the slick surface.

The summer Lion Head Trail remains a preferred east side route to the summit over the Tuckerman and Huntington Ravine Trails, though watch for our recommendation towards the Winter Route that will come with additional snowpack development.

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 9:30 a.m. December 17, 2019.**