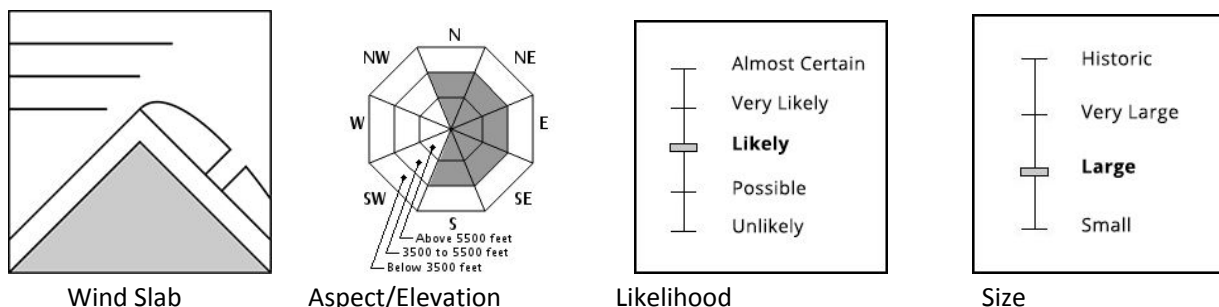


The Bottom Line

Large wind slabs exist on east-facing, avalanche prone slopes that may release naturally today due to continued wind loading. These same wind slabs are likely to avalanche from human triggers. Red flags such as wind loading and even recent avalanche activity should be obvious today. An avalanche today has the potential to extend runouts into trees; standing on the floor of a ravine today will put you in avalanche terrain. Cautious route-finding on your approach should help you avoid lingering in the path of an avalanche. The possibility of natural avalanches, the likelihood of human-triggered avalanches, and the large size of potential avalanches has created **CONSIDERABLE** avalanche danger for today.

Mountain Weather

On Thursday, the summit of Mount Washington recorded 6.1" of 8% snow. Hermit Lake (3800') received 8" of 9% snow. Snowfall was observed all through the day with some of the heaviest bouts falling early morning on a SW wind that hovered around 20mph. As the afternoon progressed, wind shifted to the NW and increased to above 70mph, where it has since stayed, gusting above 100mph. Currently, it is -14F on the summit with below zero temperatures everywhere above 1500'. This will moderate as the day progresses with the summit reaching zero F by evening. Wind will stay from the NW and drop from the current wind speed of 90mph to 70mph by the end of today. Saturday will start clear and cold with significant snowfall expected to start after dark.

Primary Avalanche Problem


All snow at mid and upper elevations has been affected by the wind, creating wind slabs on slopes in the lee of a NW wind. Considering the overnight wind speed, these will likely present as hard slabs on open slopes with perhaps softer pockets tucked behind or under terrain features. Today's wind slabs are sitting on a much softer (weak) layer of snow that fell early yesterday morning. While today's hard slab may be stubborn to a trigger, the potential size of an avalanche today (D2: enough to bury or injure a person) as well as the possibility of natural avalanches due to continued wind loading should be enough factor heavily into your decision-making.

Forecast Discussion

After yesterday's storm, you may be tempted to block out the rain event from last weekend. Unfortunately, that refrozen surface still plays significantly into decision-making today as it will either be exposed and present long-sliding fall opportunities or buried and act as the bed surface for an avalanche event. The rain crust that developed in mid-December acted as the bed surface for several avalanche cycles and we expect the mid-January crust to do the same. High wind speeds will have scoured many slopes on the windward (west) side of the range and deposited it on slopes with an easterly aspect, creating wind slabs much thicker than the 6" recorded on the summit. Our current thin snowpack is offering less than optimal options for skiing. Use your head today and beware of scarcity leading you into thinking you need to dig a pit on a 35-degree slope. Today's weather is screaming caution and conservative decision-making.

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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.