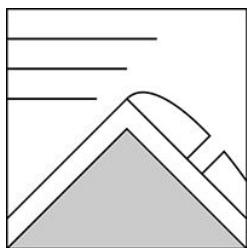


**The Bottom Line**

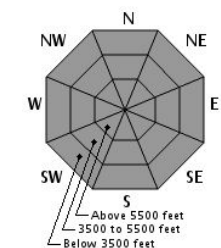
**Human-triggered avalanches are possible today as the ambient air temperature continues to warm and potentially weaken wind drifted snow.** Today's avalanche danger is **MODERATE**. If you find good skiing today, bear in mind you are likely standing on the avalanche problem. Places that you are more likely to trigger an avalanche today are: steepest terrain, convex slopes, slopes with wind drifted snow that have no support from the terrain below or along the side, rocky areas that indicate places where the wind drifted snow could be thin, and the edges of the avalanche problem where the slab overlying the weak layer is thin. With an avalanche problem that may be found on all aspects, identifying what terrain is manageable for your group will be the key to safe travel today. As temperatures climb, be on the lookout for icefall today, particularly at lower elevations.

**Mountain Weather**

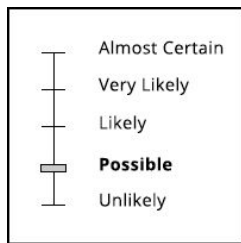
Yesterday, wind from the west started at 50mph and gradually calmed to the current 13mph. Skies had partial cloud cover all day and temperatures reached 29F at the summit, 32F at Gray Knob (4370'), 37F at Hermit Lake (3800'). High pressure over the region today will create another mild day with similar high temperatures, partly cloudy skies, and wind shifting to the south and increasing to 30mph. The next round of snowfall is forecast to begin Saturday afternoon with several inches accumulating by Sunday morning.

**Primary Avalanche Problem**


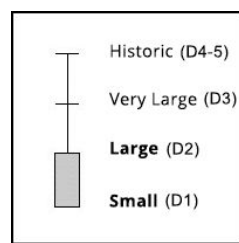
Wind Slab



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Wind slabs can be found on many slopes and should be easily identifiable by their smooth, pillowed, appearance. These will be found on slopes in the lee of our classic NW wind, but also watch for these to have cross-loaded into gullies and behind terrain features that eddy the wind. While these wind slabs are several days old by now and have had a degree of settlement, they rest on a soft layer of snow that sits directly on top of an icy, bed surface, presenting the classic recipe for an avalanche. As today's air temperature continues to warm, these slabs will weaken, creating the possibility of a skier or climber triggering the weak layer that exists, particularly over a thin spot. Terrain management will dictate the size of the avalanche problem you are dealing with, though with a thin snowpack, even a small slide can drag someone through exposed rocks and bushes or into a terrain trap.

**Forecast Discussion**

*Warming wind slab* is an avalanche problem we deal sometimes with here in this region that doesn't fit nicely into a category. Those paying close attention will have seen our aspect rose on Wednesday look different from Thursday and again different today despite the fact we labeled the avalanche problem as a wind slab problem. With yesterday's warming being driven more by solar gain, we identified the southern half of the compass as areas most likely to contain *warming wind slab*. Slightly warmer temps today with possibly more clouds following an overall warm night is leading us to believe the warming process today that will weaken our wind slab is driven more by ambient air temperature. This type of warming will affect all aspects, hence the aspect/elevation rose today identifying all wind slabs being capable of warming today and creating a *warming wind slab* avalanche problem. While warming encourages settlement, the snowpack must pass through a period of instability before it arrives at isothermal stability.

Helon Hoffer, Snow Ranger; USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest; (603)466-2713 TTY (603)466-2858

**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.