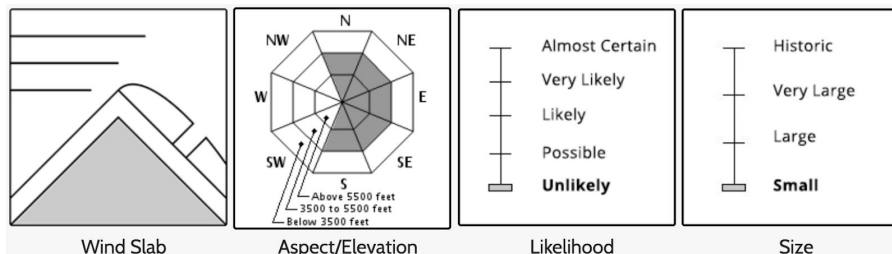


The Bottom Line

Good cramponing and horrible skiing conditions persist despite a bit of new snow yesterday. The new snow blew into pockets here and there but connecting the dots in the dust-on-crust conditions will expose you to a **sliding fall hazard**. New snow this morning will not improve ski conditions much but may produce some pockets of unstable wind slab where wind driven snow accumulates. Triggering a small pocket or losing your footing could have significant consequences on the icy, hard surface.

Avalanche Problem

Mountain Weather

Expect summit fog this morning with snow showers bringing another inch of accumulation. Northwest wind will diminish slightly through the day from 50-70 mph to 40-55 mph with some clearing of summit fog. Low visibility or flat light will persist most of the day with temps in the teens on the summit. The next round of desperately needed snow will begin late tonight and continue through morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Two days of rain and snow-eating fog wreaked havoc with our snowpack last weekend. This is the second snowpack “reset” of the season. Despite the fantasy world that many of us backcountry skiers were living in the past two seasons, the rain on snow events are a regular occurrence most Januarys in New England. In the language of snow and avalanches, our snow climate here is characterized as a “polar maritime” snow climate or, more recently, and perhaps more accurately, as a “rainy-continental” snow climate. In either case, it’s hard to sit back and watch as soft snow turns to cast iron unless you have other activities that better match the conditions. It is particularly difficult, and sometimes deadly, when bad snow is refreshed with new snow but an avalanche problem develops. Looking around the country, you’ll see many areas getting hammered by new snow but it’s falling on weak layers formed by early snowfall followed by drought and cold temps. Skiers in those areas mitigate the risk by skiing on low angle slopes, among other things. The new snow that will refresh our icy slopes in the coming days will create similar temptations but with limited options for skiing, at least until local ski trails and glades get their share of obstacle-covering snow. Beware of the new snow and resulting wind slabs that develop over the next few days and remember what lurks beneath as you make your plans.

Additional Concerns

The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails are icy with many waterbars exposed. Microspikes and crampons are better tools for ascent than skis and climbing skins.

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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.