MOUNT WASHINGTON AVALANCHE CENTER

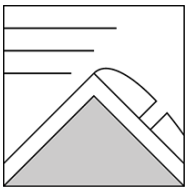
Avalanche Forecast issued on Saturday, January 4, 2019

The Bottom Line

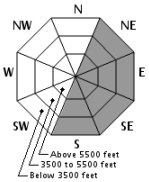
- Large natural avalanches and human triggered avalanches occurred two-three days ago.
- An icy bed surface and weak layers beneath the existing wind slab may not have fully healed and bonded.
- Evaluate snow and terrain carefully. Smooth, hollow or stiff snow on rollovers and in the steepest terrain should be avoided or carefully assessed.
- New snow falling today and summit fog will make visual assessment difficult.
- Human triggered avalanches capable of burying a person remain possible in specific areas. Natural avalanches are unlikely.

The Winter Lion Head Route is the safer route to the summit from the east side. **An ice axe and crampons are needed near treeline and above.** The Sherburne ski trail has improved quite a bit with the new snow though some open water bars remain with barely submerged rocks lurking here and there.

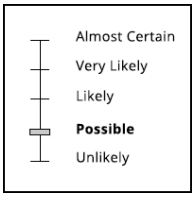
Primary Avalanche Problem



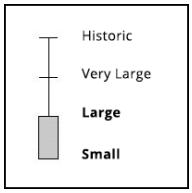
Wind Slab



Location



Likelihood



Size

Dense snow from the New Year's storm followed by more lower density snow on strong west and northwest wind built wind slabs on lee slopes and wind sheltered locations. Cross-loading also occurred along with pooling in the aprons beneath steep slopes, gullies and cliff bands.

Mountain Weather

Temperatures have slowly risen into the mid and upper 20's since the last storm dumped over a foot of snow in the high country. A low pressure system passing to our south will bring up to 4" of new snow as the system passes, with an inch or two expected during daylight hours. West wind will decrease through the day though may blow hard enough at times early on to move some snow. Expect visibility to be challenged by snow, flat light and building summit fog. Wind will diminish from the 40mph range to the 15-30mph range today. Expect more snow and increasing west winds overnight with colder temperatures and stronger winds tomorrow more than likely building new wind slabs tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Sixteen inches (42.6cm) of snow was recorded at Hermit Lake during the New Year's storm. This snow was dense, in the 15-17% range, early on in the storm before upslope snow fell in the wake of the storm. That snow was a mix of rimed snowflakes, a.k.a. graupel, and somewhat lower density snow that was easily transported by increasing westerly winds in the 60-80 mph range. As of Friday, the New Year's storm and wind loaded snow that followed contain layers that fail in the moderate range and display some tendency to propagate in stability tests. Though slowly warming temperatures have encouraged a healthy degree of settlement, the rounding and sintering that needs to occur in the angular grains deeper in the snowpack may not have occurred yet. Given the icy bed surface, steep slopes with large areas of hangfire, combined with the recency of avalanche activity (less than 48 hours as of this writing) and potential for some new snow makes it hard to rule out human triggered avalanches today.

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