

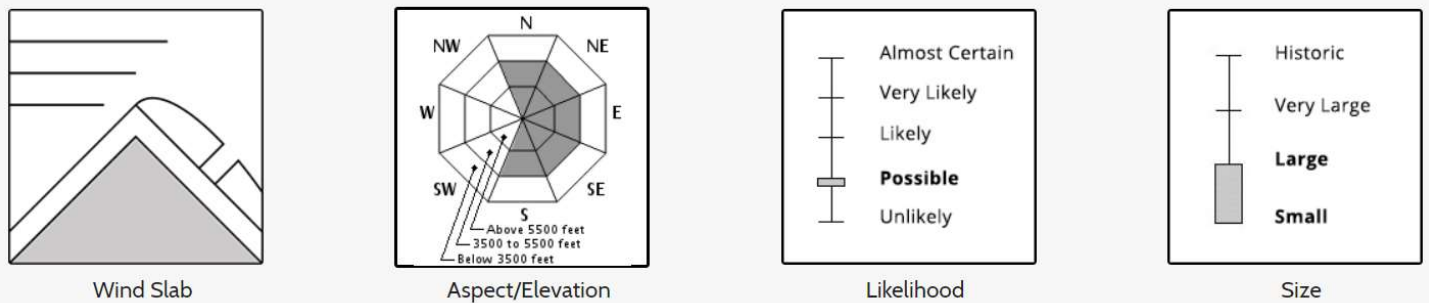
The Bottom Line

Human triggered avalanches are possible where the wind has drifted recent snowfall. Any new snow later this afternoon will be blown by the wind to form new slabs of drifted snow. Cliffs, trees, and terrain traps can increase the consequence of being caught in a slide. Picture where an avalanche would carry you before skiing or climbing steeper slopes. The avalanche danger is MODERATE today.

Mountain Weather

The 2.6" of snow Saturday and the 2.2" of snow Sunday was transported, drifted, packed and scoured (depending on where you look) by WNW wind in the 60-70 mph range on Sunday. Today, we start the day with a rare zen-like calm and clarity with a summit temperature of 7F and SSW at 6mph. Clear skies won't last long, clouds and the chance for snow showers return early this afternoon. Wind will shift west and increase through the day to 45-60 mph. Up to 1" of new snow is possible by the end of the day. Tonight 1 to 2 more inches of snow are possible on continued W wind of 50-70mph. Tomorrow is forecast to be clearing with decreasing wind.

Primary Avalanche Problem



New wind slabs formed from yesterday's strong wind will generally be stiff with good bridging strength especially where most exposed to the strongest winds. However, even a stiff wind slab can be triggered to slide if you find a weak point in the form of a convex terrain feature, or a thin spot over buried rocks or bushes. Be alert to the consequences of triggering an avalanche and evaluate the terrain as you move about the mountains today. Watch for additional snow this afternoon and tonight drifting into new and possibly more sensitive wind slabs.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

It has been 4 days since the last known avalanche activity (link 1, link 2) and we expect the snow from the New Year's Eve storm to be largely settled and likely unreactive. As predicting the stabilization of wind slabs includes a fair bit of uncertainty, and the fact that it's been just 4 days, it would be wise to respect these older but larger wind slabs. With yesterday's strong wind, new slabs will be mixed in with scoured terrain and feel stiff and supportive, while still susceptible to a human trigger.

Additional Concerns

The Lion Head Winter Route is open and remains the safer choice for accessing the summit of Mount Washington from the east. An ice axe and crampons are needed near treeline and above with micro-spikes useful in wind scoured areas.

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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.