

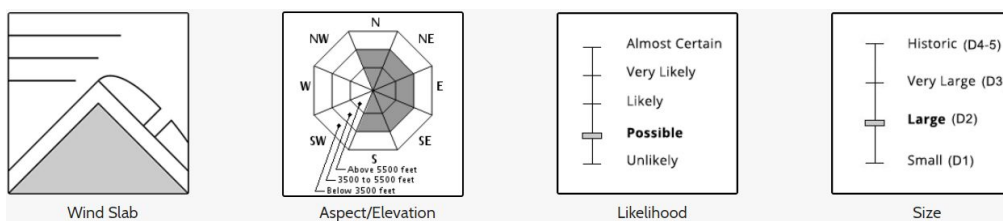
The Bottom Line

While triggering a small avalanche is possible in areas of sheltered, pillowed snow, it is the outside chance of a larger avalanche breaking wider and bigger than expected that is of main concern. Today is a good day to ease into terrain, evaluating the snowpack as you move through it. It is possible that a small avalanche could provide the mass needed to trigger a deeper weak layer. While unlikely, thin spots exist on large slopes that could act as trigger points for a larger avalanche. Identify these features of concern and manage them to your group's ability. The avalanche danger today on slopes that contain wind drifted snow is **MODERATE**.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday, intermittent snow showers throughout the day delivered 2.1" of snow to the summit. West wind hovered around 35mph until mid-afternoon when speed increased overnight. Today will be cold and grow colder, reaching -15F, with clearing skies. Early AM snow showers should abate with little accumulation. Wind is from the NW, blowing 70mph, and should decrease to 35-50mph later. Tomorrow will be clear with highs on the summits around 10F. Wind from the west will start around 40mph and increase toward 80mph in the afternoon.

Avalanche Problem



Wind slabs exist in much of the terrain that is in the lee of a west wind and have been growing in size over the past 7 days. Wind speeds have remained below the scouring threshold, leaving a mix of firm, stubborn slabs in locations exposed to the wind while sheltered locations will have softer slabs that appeal to skiers. Changes in ski or boot penetration is a cause for concern and should indicate time to evaluate the snowpack, particularly when approaching steeper terrain, a convex feature, or a change in slope aspect.

Forecast Discussion

A week ago today was the most recent rain event that left a widespread breakable crust. Since that crust formed, 15" of snow has fallen on terrain above 3500'. This snow has fallen gradually with 1-4" each day on moderate wind from the western half of the compass. Looking above this crust, here are some observations that give us a degree of uncertainty today:

- After an avalanche cycle occurred Monday, we have not observed or had any avalanche activity reported.
- The structure of the snow has an inverted nature.
- Digging in the snow will reveal many layers and clean interfaces.
- Sheltered areas with softer snow contain enough energy to produce propagation.

The above points indicate bridging strength is winning over concerns of instability, but this could change due to the human factor running around the mountain. Good visibility today should aid in route-planning and help ensure you avoid traveling underneath another party.

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.