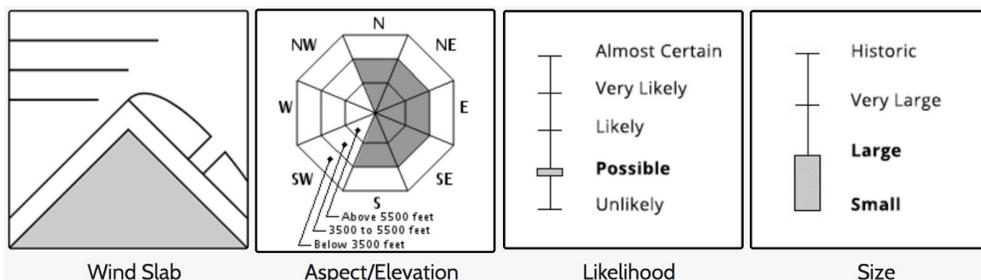


The Bottom Line

Wind blown snow drifted down the steepest slopes and gullies and built wind slabs this week. You can avoid this potentially unstable snow by staying on the January 26 freezing rain crust that glazes much of the terrain. While no avalanches have been reported this week, the upside down nature of the snow and the large size of some of these isolated slabs leads us to a **MODERATE** danger rating again today. Evaluate the snow and consider your terrain before committing to skiing this snow. Large areas of accumulated snow, like below the cliffs of the Headwall of Tuckerman Ravine, have the largest slabs and greatest consequences. Areas scoured to the freezing rain crust have **LOW** avalanche hazard but create a long sliding fall concern. While generally breakable, this crust is very slick.

Avalanche Problem



Field work and observations indicate that the layers of ice and melt freeze crusts reduces propagation potential in the thickest slabs. Thin and mostly harmless surface slabs are more reactive on shady aspects. The snow structure leads us to believe a very large trigger would be required to trigger a deep slab on the January 13 ice crust a meter or more down. Sunshine and low winds have helped settle many south facing slopes.

Mountain Weather

Mild, stable weather continues today with summit temperatures in the high teens. Cloud cover will persist, with summits likely shrouded in fog throughout the day. Flat light may make route-finding a bit challenging since it will be hard to tell the difference between the ice crust and newer wind packed snow surfaces. Wind from the west will diminish from 25-50 to 15-30 mph. Wind transported snow is unlikely today.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The complexity of the snowpack makes recreation challenging today. The softest snow for skiing is riddled with wind pressed surface snow that grabs your boots. The freezing rain crust that supports a skier's weight creates a tilted ice rink experience while skinning in scoured areas....leave your wide skis at home. Climbers will find the northern gullies in Huntington Ravine largely scoured while more wind sheltered climbs contain firm, stubborn wind slabs that may rest on a much softer layer of rime snow. Though none of the slabs appear to be able to carry a crack any distance, it is worth considering the terrain configuration that they rest on. Dig frequently and avoid slabs in very steep or unsupported areas.

Additional Concerns

The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails are snow covered to Pinkham Notch with good skiing to about 2500' where there is less snow and more ice. Beware of breakable crusts off trail.

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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.