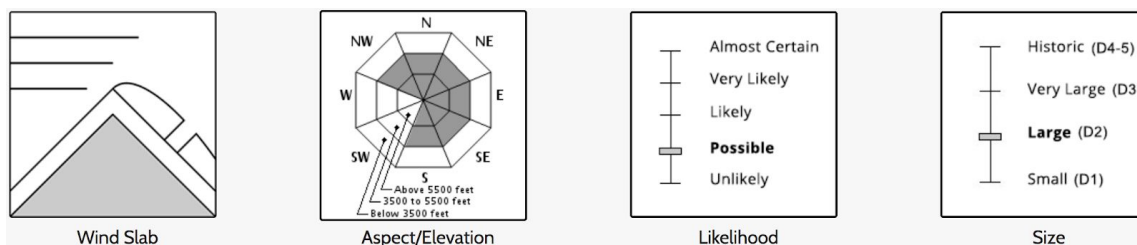


The Bottom Line

Natural avalanches occurred late Tuesday or early Wednesday morning. Strong wind since that time has continued to build wind slabs in east facing terrain. These wind slabs are likely to be stubborn in most areas but large in isolated areas. Evaluate these areas of smooth, wind drifted snow carefully for signs of instability such as cracking or soft layers underneath. MODERATE avalanche danger exists where this wind loading has occurred with LOW danger in areas scoured to an ice crust.

Avalanche Problem



Limited observations yesterday confirmed that heavy wind loading occurred from west and south winds on Tuesday and early Wednesday. Include north facing aspects, where that southerly wind created wind slabs, when making your travel decisions. While the wind speed record yesterday makes it likely that these newer slabs will be stubborn and resist triggering, this has not yet been confirmed.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday, the summit observatory recorded 1.1" snow (.13" SWE) with heavier snow squalls to the south and east of the summit yesterday morning following the 5-10" that fell Tuesday. Wind was steady in the 70-80 mph range from west and then northwest. Today, high pressure will dominate the eastern US with clear skies and cold temperatures on tap for a while. Temps will only reach -10F or so today with wind dying down to 30-45mph through the day. Continued cold tonight, down to -15 to -20. Tomorrow, the dry spell continues and will persist through the weekend, with the next chance for precipitation arriving Tuesday. Temperature will rebound to the single digits above zero with west and northwest summit winds continuing in the 40-50 mph range.

Forecast Discussion

Clearing conditions yesterday afternoon allowed a look into the Gulf of Slides. Though afternoon shadows, continued fog, and blowing snow reduced visibility, the crown near the top of Main Gully was clear at times and only partially reloaded. The crown thickness and debris pile led me to estimate a R3D2.5 size though the knoll at the base slowed and captured most of the flow; maybe an R4 if you exclude the historical runout. In any case, the debris swept through the trees on the lookers left of the gully and is a good reminder of the danger of approaching these gullies from below in periods of active loading. The trees in the start zone and in the path do not serve as anchors or protection in any meaningful way.

We hope to gather some more field observations today to fill in the gaps on the current state of the snowpack following this round of snow and avalanches. Snow accumulations vary widely through the forecast area and we are looking to get a handle on the redistribution due to the south wind and any avalanches that may have resulted. Please submit photos or a quick observation if you brave the cold today.

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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.