

The Bottom Line

A fairly settled period of weather for the forecast area continues today; the theme remains as yesterday but more so: cold temperatures, clear skies and a very hard, frozen travel surface in most all alpine terrain. The saturated snowpack from Friday's rain event has frozen the travel surface hard overnight with a night time low of -4F on the summit. **The primary danger today remains a long sliding fall as a result of a trip or slip that is not immediately arrested.** The avalanche hazard is LOW. Normal travel precautions should be observed.

The AMC, a USFS cooperator, has closed all facilities at Pinkham Notch, including the restrooms. Please plan accordingly until alternatives are in place. The winter pit toilets at Hermit Lake remain open though the store and breezeway at HoJo's (the caretakers cabin) remain closed along with all shelters and camping.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday, temperatures hovered in the 20's at Hermit Lake and in the single digits on the summit. Winds eased as the day progressed to a steady 40-50 mph over the summit in the afternoon. Skies remained mostly clear. Today, winds from the NW will continue to decrease today. Another sunny day but remaining cold with an anticipated high remaining in single digits at the summit. Wind and cold will likely limit any warming of the snow surface despite the sunshine. Tomorrow, a weather system moves in from the south late on Monday with increasing winds and the possibility of up to an inch of snow falling during the day, currently forecast to arrive in the afternoon, with 3-5" more falling overnight.

Forecast Discussion

We can expect a repeat of yesterday's snow and weather conditions. Skies will be clear and sunny, but temperatures will remain very cold throughout the day. Temperature at Hermit Lake at 5 am today was 0F. The snowpack will be frozen hard today on all aspects with the possible exception of steep south facing slopes. Although today's temperatures don't reflect it, we are now into spring, and the sun is becoming more of a factor on our snowpack. Solar warming on steep south facing slopes, where the angle of the sun will be most concentrated by the afternoon, may occur but enjoying these slopes on skis will require passing through frozen, icy terrain. Limited surface warming may allow somewhat better travel, although ice axe and crampons will still be indispensable.

Without doubt the greatest hazard today will be a slip or fall becoming a slide for life situation. Snow surfaces will be hard and impenetrable on nearly all aspects, more resembling ice than snow in most places. Be prepared by carrying the right equipment and knowing how to use it. **Full metal crampons and ice-axe are essential travel tools for all routes above treeline today.**

Additional Information

The Lion Head Winter Route remains the easiest route to the summit from Pinkham Notch but requires an ice axe, crampons (not just micro-spikes) and possibly a rope. This is a mountaineering route and requires solid skills for a safe, timely ascent.

Frank Carus, 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.