MOUNT WASHINGTON AVALANCHE CENTER

Avalanche Forecast for Thursday, March 14, 2019

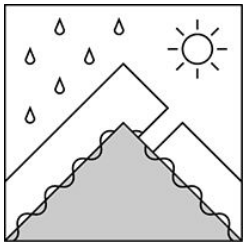
The Bottom Line

Wind slabs sitting on old ice crusts will experience rapid warming today. Most of these slabs are firm but they are also over softer snow. As these slabs warm and weaken, the unlikely possibility of a larger sized avalanche will increase. When surface slabs begin to get wet and sloppy today, human triggered avalanches will increase in likelihood. Loose wet avalanches or sluffs are one sign that this process is getting started. Larger slopes and gullies below 3500', like those in Crawford Notch, may produce an avalanche large enough to hurt you or even bury you as well. MODERATE avalanche danger exists today with larger avalanche possible.

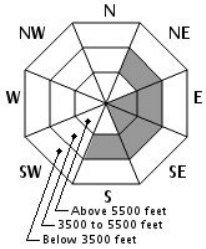
Mountain Weather

A warm front arrives today and will push temperatures to near 40F on the summit and near 50 in Crawford Notch. Expect calm winds this morning from the west at 10-12 mph before shifting southwest and increasing to 25-40 mph. Currently, the temperature on the summit is 28F with about ¾" of new snow in the past 24 hours. Some drizzle is possible later this afternoon. Warm temperatures and showers will continue overnight and into tomorrow before temperatures drop and snow showers return. It looks as if dust on crust and long sliding fall conditions will return on Saturday.

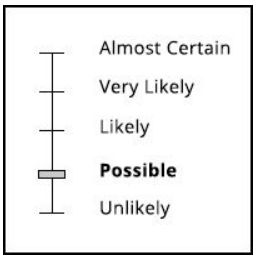
Primary Avalanche Problem



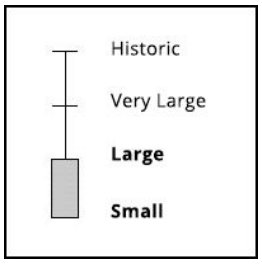
Wet Slab



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Weak layers of softer snow slowly gained strength in the past 24-48 hours. Expect reduced stability today as warm temperatures and a bit of rain weaken bonds in surface snow and send free water into the snow pack. Older wind slabs scattered around the range are bordering on the definition of persistent slabs which could create a larger avalanche than expected.

Secondary Avalanche Problem - Loose Wet Snow

Areas of softer snow will be affected more quickly by sun and warm temperatures. Wet loose sluffs may occur on or below steep areas, especially on or below cliffs that absorb sunshine. This type of avalanche is a warning sign for the more dangerous wet slab avalanche type. Wet loose avalanches or sluffs can add load to and trigger a slab.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Our snowpack structure bears a resemblance to the 2013-14 snowpack that produced a very large and destructive avalanche on the summit cone on March 29th of that season. This year's melt/freeze crusts have facilitated large avalanches this season as well. Icy crusts and cold temperatures are one recipe for weak crystal types to form deep in the snowpack. Weather conditions this season have created enough crusts and cold temps to put deeper weak layers on the list of things to consider when travelling around the forecast area when temperatures rise and melting begins. Our wind driven snowpack and avalanche problems result in a very spatially diverse snowpack which fortunately keeps that type of avalanche unusual here. Unusual avalanches are one reason that make it a good idea to carry a beacon, probe and shovel and minimize your exposure in avalanche terrain.

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