

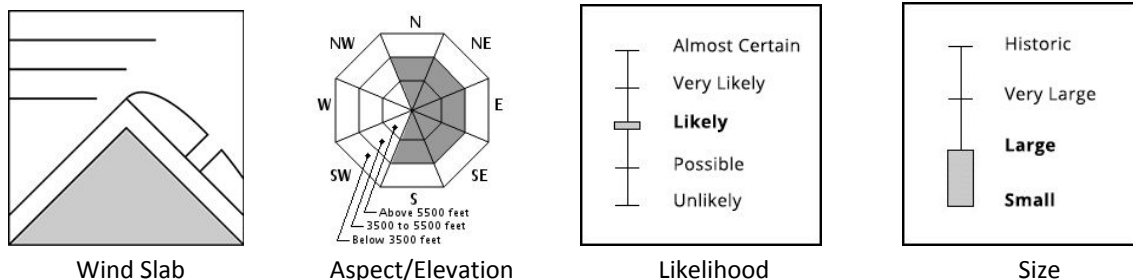
The Bottom Line

Avalanche danger will increase rapidly today as wind shifts to blow from the west while increasing in speed. This will transport the new snow of last night and this morning, building new wind slabs that will grow in size quickly and may become likely to human trigger. Windward terrain may become scoured and lack an avalanche problem, while wind loaded terrain is likely to reach **CONSIDERABLE** avalanche danger by late afternoon or evening. This danger rating is largely driven by a weather forecast which calls for shifting winds, which means that your observations of where wind slabs are actively being created is crucial information today.

Mountain Weather

Snowfall last night totaled 2-3 inches and it's snowing lightly across most of our terrain this morning. Another inch or so of snow is forecast today as precipitation winds down and summit temperature holds around 10F. Southerly wind overnight peaked at 30 mph, with stronger gusts, and has since decreased. Light and variable wind early today will gradually increase and blow from a westerly direction. Summit wind speeds should be in the 30-45 mph range by this evening and continue to increase after dark. Tomorrow is forecast to be about 10 degrees colder, with W wind around 60 mph and light snowfall possible late in the day.

Primary Avalanche Problem



Snow early last week fell on sustained westerly wind over 100 mph, creating hard wind slabs that are large and specifically located on the eastern half of the compass rose. These wind speeds always create weird wind patterns, and you'll find smaller pockets of wind slab in other areas as well. Both large and small areas of wind slab have become unlikely to human trigger. Remember that unlikely does not mean impossible and use normal caution if you travel in avalanche terrain today.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The hard and unreactive surface wind slabs of late last week are slowly being covered by reactive newer slabs from moderate wind and several recent snowfall events. Areas with the greatest upwind fetch for westerly wind, like the headwall of Tuckerman Ravine, had the greatest new wind slab development and also saw human triggered avalanche activity yesterday. A majority of our terrain yesterday was not loaded with enough new snow to have an avalanche problem, but the day served as an excellent reminder that our extreme terrain can build slabs and produce avalanches very quickly. This will be the story for later today, as increasing wind shifts west and loads easterly terrain, this time with twice as much snow available for wind transport. Today's relatively dense snow is sitting on lighter snow from yesterday, and new wind slabs forming today should be more dense still and provide a cohesive over weak structure. Many areas will lack an avalanche problem this morning, particularly terrain on the western half of the compass rose where wind slabs are unlikely to develop at all today. Between this aspect driven variability, softer old slabs at lower elevations, and other typical mid-winter snowpack variability, it's as important as ever to make good observations to guide your terrain choices 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 or at the Harvard Cabin.