

The Bottom Line

Cold temperatures and a couple inches of new sleet, freezing rain and snow fell Tuesday night and remind us that it isn't just about corn every day, even when the calendar and leaves on the trees say that it is spring. Be sure to check summit weather before heading up and prepare for a mixed bag of conditions ranging from refrozen, icy snow to intense thunderstorms. Currently, Hillman's Highway offers the longest ski descent with the fewest hazards followed by Left Gully in the Bowl. There is more information on the many springtime hazards unique to Mount Washington and especially Tuckerman Ravine in the following sections of this bulletin, which is likely to be our second to last for the 2018-19 season.

Our generous winter snowfall leaves plenty of skiing to be done in the backcountry, and slackcountry, but this weekend will be the last that snow rangers and ski patrol work in Tuckerman Ravine. We will close the Tuckerman Ravine trail where it passes through the Lip above Lunch Rocks and to the Alpine Garden trail by next week. The magnitude of crevasses and undermined snow in the Lip raise the level of consequence of hiking or skiing in this area, along with the danger to potential rescuers, to the point that closure makes sense. The Lion Head Winter Route and Summer Trail are almost melted enough that a change back to the Summer Trail is possible. We will notify the public of the switch and post signs when completed. That annual switch is about protecting the winter route from erosion and keeping the unwary from the sliding fall and avalanche hazards that exist on the summer trail near treeline. As such, the Lion Head switch is not a legal closure, unlike the Tuckerman Ravine trail closure which is supported by law and carries a stiff penalty for violation. If you plan to drive the Auto Road to ski, remember that slackfest fun shouldn't include trampling the delicate alpine vegetation. Please limit walking to durable surfaces like rocks or snow and ice to preserve the delicate and slow growing plant communities in the alpine.

Mountain Weather

A mixed bag of fast moving low pressure systems with associated rain is on tap for the rest of the week. Looks like windows of good high pressure are mixed in as well, so plan accordingly. Today (Wednesday) and Thursday should be clear with warm enough conditions. Showers return overnight Thursday into Friday which should be unsettled but not a washout. Showers seem likely on Saturday with high temperatures near 48F on the summit with thunderstorms developing overnight but clearing for Sunday, which seems like the better day of the weekend.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Prolonged periods of melt have opened deep cracks and holes in the snowpack. Beware of these at the margins of the snowpack as well as places that have large cliff bands, like the Headwall in Tuckerman. Keep the following hazards in mind as you make terrain decisions in our dynamic spring backcountry conditions:

Moats and other deep melt holes | Waterfall holes | Opening streams and undermined snow | Glide cracks | Falling ice and rock | Avalanches | Sliding falls

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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.