

The Bottom Line

Avalanches will become possible as late season snow accumulates in our well developed slide paths on Tuesday. Small and relatively harmless loose avalanche types are likely to occur in the steepest terrain but thicker storm slabs could be triggered on larger slopes and in steep gullies if the upper end of the forecast 6-12" of snow falls, particularly if the snow is further loaded into wind slabs. Be on the lookout for these wind slabs to develop as wind speed increases on Wednesday. Wind slab size should be limited by the lack of snow available in the currently melted out alpine zone but could still be large enough to carry you and possibly bury you. Also, the new snow may be subjected to rapid warming as skies begin to clear Wednesday which could make wet snow avalanches increasingly possible.

Bear in mind that any avalanche activity this week will be particularly dangerous due to the state of the snowpack. Rocks, holes, slots and trees have all reemerged over the past few weeks of melting and will serve as terrain traps and obstacles to strike in a sliding fall on the old, refrozen snow beneath the new. Evaluate the snow and terrain carefully and employ standard safe travel techniques such as moving one at a time on steep slopes, carrying probe and shovel and wearing an avalanche beacon. If you do not have any of those things, wait until this new snow and wind slabs have settled, hopefully by the weekend.

Mountain Weather

A storm in the Gulf of Maine is bringing new snow to elevations above 2000 feet with 10cm (4") of new snow recorded on Monday night at Hermit Lake (3,800'). Initially, winds are forecast to remain in the 20-35 mph range from the east before shifting north and increasing in speed on Tuesday afternoon. By Wednesday, winds will be from the northwest at 30-45 mph with higher gusts. Temperatures on Tuesday will hover in the high 20's at Ravine elevations during the snowfall. Anticipate temperatures pushing above freezing later in the week though continued unsettled weather may bring more light snow and rain at Ravine elevations.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Snowfall totals from this storm will vary widely by elevation and aspect within the Presidential range but certainly enough snow will fall to restore concerns about avalanches, adding complexity and challenges to skiing or hiking. Prolonged periods of melt have opened deep cracks in Tuckerman Ravine and holes have grown elsewhere in the snowpack near rocks and over streams in steep gullies. New snow will obscure these hazards from view. 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, Long sliding falls, Sliding falls, even short ones.**

Steep snow and ice in gullies and trails, such as the Lion Head Winter Route, become very hard during any frozen periods in our spring melt/freeze cycles requiring crampons and an ice axe to climb with security. The tops of many ski descents also fit this description.

Additional Concerns

Due to heavy snow and wind loading this winter, the Lion Head Winter Route remains the preferred, easier route to the summit from the east side. The new snow on the Lion Head Summer Trail makes this option particularly poor. The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails have little snow cover below Hermit Lake. Expect ice, open stream crossings, rocks, bare patches and plenty of mud all barely concealed by new snow. If you attempt to ski further than the rope set to direct ski traffic to the Tuckerman Ravine Trail, be conscientious of erosion damage caused by walking on soft ground by moving over to the Tuckerman Ravine trail using one of the crossovers when needed. Please remove your skis and walk down the Tuckerman Ravine Trail to avoid collision with the many hikers on the trail.

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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.