

General Bulletin, Tuesday, December 24, 2019

A new bulletin will be posted when conditions warrant and resources allow.

General Bulletins are issued when unstable snow may exist within our forecast areas but before conditions or available resources warrant 5-scale avalanche forecasts to begin. We will start 5-scale forecasts on Wednesday, January 15 or earlier, if possible. **Please remember that avalanches can and do occur before 5-scale avalanche forecasts are issued.**

It has been 5 days since the last measurable snow and the snowpack is generally stable. The exception to this would include unsupported wind slabs found on steep terrain where triggering even a small avalanche could result in a slide-for-life above rocks and cliffs. Identify these wind slabs by looking for convex pillows of snow drifted into wind protected areas. Minimize your exposure to this hazard by traveling on low angle terrain, or snow supported by the surrounding terrain: concave or planar slopes. Travel one at a time and be extra cautious with crampons or ski turns continually considering the consequences of a fall. Fair weather is expected for the next few days. Enjoy the holidays and be safe.

The summer Lion Head Trail remains the safer choice for accessing the summit of Mount Washington from the east. The Tuckerman Ravine and Huntington Ravine trails are challenging climbs with significant avalanche hazard during winter. **An ice axe and crampons are needed near treeline and above.** The Winter Lion Head Route still needs more snow. The Sherburne ski trail has snow coverage to the parking lot though rocks and the occasional open water bar should be easy to avoid.

Mountain Weather

Temperatures in the 20s the next few days will continue to increase stability in the snowpack and no additional snow is expected until Friday when an approaching low may bring snow showers with low snow totals expected. Skies will be clear or partly cloudy with moderate winds at least until Thursday. The longer range forecast suggests the potential for a larger storm and increasing avalanche hazard on Sunday & Monday. Be sure to check the Higher Summits forecast when making plans.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Presidential Range has not had any significant precipitation since the 19th and none is expected until Friday. Surface conditions consist of wind slabs formed from 22cm of snow that fell the middle of last week, and to a lesser extent December 15 refrozen rain crust. Observations in the alpine report more widespread rain crust, though a surprising amount of snow remains available for wind transport on the SE snowfields above Tuckerman Ravine.

Additional Concerns

Overall, our terrain remains poorly filled in with exposed early season hazards.

- **Rocks, trees and bushes** lurk in the snow and in the fall line. Skiing or sliding into obstacles can ruin your day or worse. New snow may just barely cover a season ending stump or boulder.
- **Terrain traps and cliffs** make burial and significant injury a real possibility, heightening the consequences of a fall or small avalanche.
- **Long sliding falls** are a threat despite the appearance of new, soft snow on your approach. Wind can easily scour parts of your climb or hike down to a hard bed surface.

Please Remember:

- Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This bulletin is just one tool to help you make your own decisions in avalanche terrain. You control your own risk by choosing where, when, and how you travel.
- Anticipate the avalanche danger to change when actual weather differs from the higher summits 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.
- **Posted 3 p.m. December 24, 2019.**