

# General Bulletin, Monday, December 30, 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.**

A storm system will impact the forecast area over the next 24 to 36 hours bringing up to 13" of snow before tapering off Thursday morning. Wind and new snow will combine to form fresh wind slabs capable of producing avalanches. The size and chance of triggering avalanches will increase as the snow continues to fall over the next few days. Continued, poor visibility will make identifying these new slabs challenging so be conservative with terrain choices until the weather settles later in the week.

**The summer Lion Head Trail remains the safer choice for accessing the summit of Mount Washington from the east. An ice axe and crampons are needed near treeline and above.** The Winter Lion Head Route still needs more snow.

## Mountain Weather

A storm system will bring much needed snow to the range over the next 48 hours and continued snow showers through Wednesday. Both the NWS and the OBS are in agreement that a foot or more new snow is possible at the upper elevations, with the chance of mixed precipitation at higher elevations for a brief period on Tuesday afternoon as milder air wraps into the area. Temperatures will be in the teens to lower 20s F with wind from the SE at 25-60 mph through the storm period and as the low pressure pulls away Tuesday evening seasonably colder air will return with increasing winds from the west. For travelers above treeline, expect blowing snow creating near white out conditions making navigating difficult.

## Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

From field observations (thank you) we believe that the 4.4mm of liquid that fell on Friday the 27th penetrated into the snow surface before temperatures dropped on the 28th creating a snow surface more closely resembling textured foam than solid water ice. This textured surface will be conducive to bonding for the new snow expected over the next few days. With wind forecast light to moderate over the next few days, drifted snow will likely be found higher up in the terrain, helping to fill start zones & covering more bushes. In the short term, this will present the potential for sensitive new wind slabs to be found closer to ridge tops than we've had this season, and in the long term create a larger, wider bed surface for the next avalanche cycle. Another hopeful point is that this new snow should put us back on track to fill in our snowpack. Looking at the numbers, the average snow total for December on the summit of Mount Washington is 45.5". As of this morning we are at 37" so if we get 12" before the end of the day Tuesday we will be above average for the month of December. Let's hope we finish out the year above average!

## 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 7:15 a.m. December 30, 2019.**

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USDA Forest Service