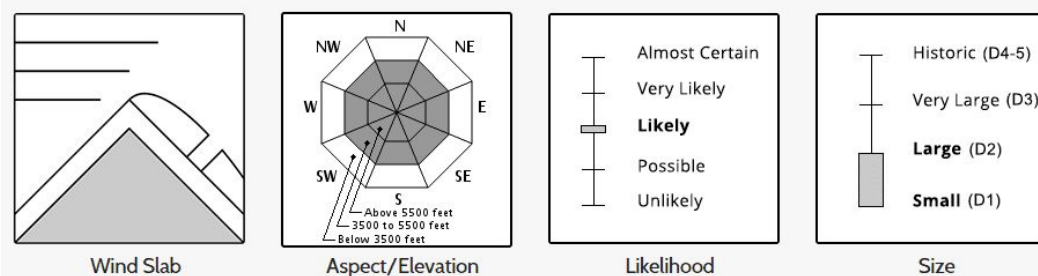


**The Bottom Line - CONSIDERABLE avalanche danger exists today**

Drifted snow may release naturally today in the steepest terrain and may entrain enough snow to push you into the rocks and terrain traps that exist in our sparsely covered slopes. These wind slabs are likely to avalanche from human triggers. Steep slopes should be approached with caution. Limit time spent in avalanche paths such as the floor of Tuckerman Ravine. Evaluate the snow and terrain carefully today and be cautious in your route-finding. Even small avalanches today have the potential to become large avalanches by stepping down and into wind slabs formed Jan 13 – 16. Watch for terrain traps and keep in mind a small manageable slab could become a larger problem.

**Mountain Weather**

The summit recorded 5" of snow overnight on 55-70 mph SW wind before temperatures warmed, turning snow to freezing rain early this morning. Hermit Lake snowplot reports 4.3" with a thin ice crust on the surface. At 4am the summit temperature reached 27F, and just under 32F down to around 1600'. Due to warm air aloft, any remaining precipitation will fall as a freezing drizzle before turning back to snow showers as the temperatures drop throughout the day, eventually bottoming out at mid teens F. South wind has already begun to shift W at 15-30 increasing to 45-60 mph. A trace to 2" of snow is possible later today and another 2" tonight with snow totals much less elevation dependent with cold air firmly in place.

**Primary Avalanche Problem**


Wind slabs formed from dense new snow which fell overnight will add strain to existing wind slabs. New wind slabs will form today and will likely be sensitive to human triggering. Due to the shift in wind direction these new wind slabs will grow fairly thick. West wind this afternoon will have more snow to work with due to the sizable fetch in the alpine plateaus above treeline around the summit cone.

**Secondary Avalanche Problem**

**Wet Loose:** Wet heavy snow at mid and lower elevations may release today until temperatures drop. These slow moving, often point release avalanches can increase in size and contain enough mass to drag a skier or climber down over dangerous terrain features such as cliffs. Be mindful of the terrain below you, and keep an eye on temperatures throughout the day.

**Forecast Discussion**

The mixed bag of new precipitation combined with lingering wind slabs that have been very slow to fully stabilize confounds our ability to predict exactly how avalanche potential will play out today. After much discussion, forecasters settled on two avalanche problems that fall on a continuum of the potential avalanche issues that may exist today. One of the comments referred to the old adage about the dangers of trying to outwit the avalanche problem. If you choose to climb or ski today, you will encounter a wide array of snow on the ground as well as changing weather conditions with new snow and a new wind direction adding another layer of complexity to the widely variable existing wind slab and new snow avalanche problem. Be cautious as you travel, move one at a time through avalanche paths, choose terrain carefully and use it to your advantage.

Jeff Fongemie, Snow Ranger USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest; (603)466-2713 TTY (603)466-2858

**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.