

The Bottom Line

- The potential remains for a long sliding fall in wind scoured steep areas today.
- Monitor new snowfall amounts closely and limit time spent in avalanche paths, especially this afternoon.
- Watch for snow blowing around anywhere near treeline. This is your signal that wind slabs are developing.
- Larger and more dangerous wind slabs may become reactive and fail without a human trigger later in the day.
- Avalanche danger will rise to **CONSIDERABLE** quickly if we receive more than the forecast amount of snow or if winds increase earlier in the day

An icy bed surface and many obstacles exist in our snowpack which has been plagued by rain and well-above average temperatures since mid-December. Choose your timing and terrain carefully today. New snow in steep terrain today will likely not bond well, particularly as snow loads into avalanche start zones by wind action and sluffing. These wind slabs will become easier to trigger and larger as snow piles up. Though we are starting out the day with **MODERATE** avalanche danger this morning, areas that see wind loading will rise to **CONSIDERABLE**. Natural avalanches will be likely in a few areas, such as the Headwall and Lip of Tuckerman Ravine late in the day and overnight.

Avalanche Problem

Wind slabs will accumulate and grow larger, more dangerous and will run further through the day. Wind slabs will be poorly bonded to the icy crust. Look for signs of wind loading, shooting cracks in the surface snow and increasing snowfall rates. Wind can build thick wind slabs quickly. Avoiding steep terrain and avalanche paths is the simplest strategy to stay out of trouble today. (see website for graphics)

Mountain Weather

The low pressure system strengthening off the coast of Maine will send an arm of heavier precipitation to interior southwestern Maine and, with less certainty, into northern NH. This band of snow would add a few more inches to the 2-4" of snow already forecast for the range if it reaches this far interior. The key weather factor to keep your eye on today is the wind speed and direction. Currently wind is from the SW in the 20-35 mph, as measured on the summit, which is barely fast enough to move snow into most of our avalanche paths. Wind shifts to the NW and ramps up in velocity this afternoon and will move much of the 3cm of snow from yesterday along with new snow falling today.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

There is likely to be a lot of visible refrozen and icy bed surface today despite the new snow. Scouring winds will probably make this the case tomorrow as well. It's important to note that much of the avalanche activity this year has occurred on the frozen crusts that have developed several times this season. While we have no concerns currently about any weak layers beneath the current melt/freeze and rain crust, our wind action and new snow will create more than enough avalanche hazard. The good news is that this avalanche problem is easily avoided and obvious. The bad news is that the lean snowpack in lower elevation glades and trails may push you towards more open slopes and gullies at a higher elevation, which is of course, prime avalanche terrain. If it makes your decision any easier, remember that the icy bed surface lurks just below any new snow today and the magic combination of low angle terrain and snow deep enough to keep your skis off the icy surface will be really limited. Today and tomorrow look like a good time to let the snow pile up and bury the icy crust and obstacles in the lee terrain.

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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.