MOUNT WASHINGTON AVALANCHE CENTER

Avalanche Forecast for Saturday, February 22, 2020

The Bottom Line

Avalanche conditions are generally safe. That being said, LOW avalanche danger today does not mean no avalanche danger, nor does it reduce the other objective hazards associated with traveling in the mountains. If traveling or riding in extreme terrain, consider the consequences of triggering even a small slide or losing an edge on the firm snow while skiing and where a fall or slide might take you. Losing control in very steep terrain can lead to unfortunate outcomes if you slam into rocks, careen into other people, or go over a cliff. Practicing safe travel habits like continuing to carry avalanche rescue gear, traveling one at a time, choosing a slope appropriate for your skill level, and choosing an objective based on where the crowds ARE NOT, will help make today one to remember.

Mountain Weather

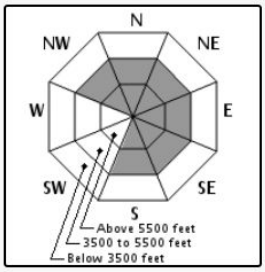
Yesterday was clear with no new snow nor observed wind transport. The day started with most elevations below 0F and ended about 20 degrees warmer.

Today begins with clear skies, a summit temperature of 2F and wind from the west blowing 60-70mph. Temperatures should warm to the teens F on the summit and the high 20sF below 3500'. Wind will decrease slightly. Afternoon snow flurries may bring a trace of snow to mid and upper elevations.

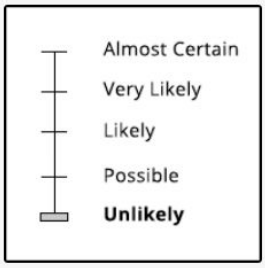
Tomorrow will get warm, though above 3500' looks to stay below freezing. Skies will be clear with wind from the west around 30mph.

Avalanche Problem

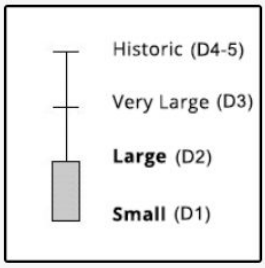
Wind Slab



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

The last reported avalanche occurred mid-week during a direct-action natural cycle that ran primarily on N, NE, and E aspects. Since then, wind has blown hard and left us with the unreactive wind slabs that you'll find today. This wind slab is smooth and firm, primarily pencil hard with one-step softer layers beneath. Triggering these wind slabs are unlikely, though not impossible; you might find protected areas with softer snow or where the wind slab becomes thin, though these are isolated pockets. The largest wind slabs are mostly hard and unreactive and you can further reduce the unlikely risk of triggering by not overloading the slope with multiple people.

Forecast Discussion

Forecast "in the clear under sunny skies" and the weekend may lead you to lesser known destinations to escape the crowd. These will exhibit the wind slab issues, but here's another find from the field yesterday that is worth tucking in your back pocket. Thanks to the wind, we're seeing the Feb 6/7 ice crust exposed in places. Cold weather this past week has promoted the development of facets under this crust. This faceting is likely not an issue where wind slab is thick or where avalanche cycles have broken the crust up. This leaves southerly aspects or perhaps less extreme terrain that did not get loaded or avalanche during the past week. These are candidates to harbor facet development. Encountering these facets may not alter your plans, but it's another proof that Low does not mean no avalanche danger.

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