

National avalanche bulletin no. 133

for Thursday, 20 March 2008

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The calm before the storm, moderate avalanche danger

Current conditions

On Wednesday in the Swiss Alps the sun shone until the afternoon hours. Subsequently, clouds moved in from the north. Midday temperatures at 2000 m were minus 9 degrees in northern regions and minus 6 degrees in southern regions. Light to moderate northerly winds prevailed.

The bonding between the old snowpack and the new snow from the beginning of this week is improving incrementally. The uppermost layers are still loosely packed and cold. Beneath them, the snow is slightly consolidated and partially prone to triggering. In Goms and in the central and eastern regions of the Swiss Alps, surface hoar has formed. This could prove to be a critical weak link in the snowfall which is predicted.

Short-term development

On Wednesday night and during the day on Thursday it will be overcast. On the northern flank of the Alps and in northern Grisons, 5 to 10 cm of snow is expected. Further to the south, 2 to 5 cm of snow is expected; on the southern flank of the Alps it will remain dry. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be minus 10 degrees. Moderate northwesterly winds will prevail at 2000 m, at 3000 m the wind will be strong.

Due to the wind and the very loosely packed and easily transported snow near the surface, new snowdrift accumulations which will be prone to triggering will form.

Avalanche danger forecast for Thursday

Entire region of the Swiss Alps:

Moderate avalanche danger (Level 2)

On the northern flank of the Alps, in Lower Valais, in northern Upper Valais and in northern Grisons, the avalanche prone locations are found on west to north to south facing steep slopes above approximately 2000 m in particular. The peril in these regions stems by and large from near-to-the-surface, still poorly bonded layers of snow. In southern Upper Valais, on the southern flank of the Alps, in central Grisons and in the Engadine, the avalanche prone locations are found on northwest to north to south facing wind loaded slopes above approximately 2200 m. Even the old snowpack in these regions, with the exception of the southern flank of the Alps, is prone to triggering by larger additional loading. Cautious route selection and spacing between skiers to relieve loads are recommended in all regions.

Trend for Friday and Saturday

On Good Friday, amid storm strength westerly winds, 30 to 50 cm of snowfall is expected in the Swiss Alps, particularly in western regions. Further towards the east, the anticipated amount of snowfall will be less. On Saturday the snowfall and winds will slacken off noticeably. It will remain cold. The avalanche danger will escalate markedly on Good Friday. It is foreseen that away from secured ski runs, a delicate avalanche situation will prevail widespread.

Additional information: 'Fax-on-demand' (CHF 1.49/min)

0900 59 2020 List of fax aids SLF
0900 59 2025 Snow Depths Map (in case of major change)
0900 59 2026 New Snow Map daily

Weather Information in collaboration with MeteoSwiss

0900 162 138 / 338 Alpine Weather Report MeteoSwiss phone/fax
(phone: CHF 1.20/min) (fax: CHF 2.--/min)

Regional avalanche bulletins (CHF 1.49/min)

0900 59 20 31 Central Switzerland
0900 59 20 32 Lower Valais / VD
0900 59 20 33 Upper Valais
0900 59 20 34 North and Central Grisons
0900 59 20 35 South Grisons
0900 59 20 36 Bernese Oberland
0900 59 20 37 Eastern Part of the Northern Slope of the Alps

Internet: <http://www.slf.ch>

WAP: wap.slf.ch

Teletext: Page 782 (SF DRS)

Phone: 187 (Fr. 0.50/call and min)

Feedback information:






Email: lwp@slf.ch

Free phone/fax: 0800 800 187 / 88

Avalanche danger forecast

for Thursday, 20. March 2008

Danger level

-  1 low
-  **2 MODERATE**
-  3 considerable
-  4 high
-  5 very high

