

# National avalanche bulletin no. 21

for Friday, 16 December 2011

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## *High avalanche danger in western regions*

### Current conditions

On Thursday in western and northern regions, the skies were overcast and there was intermittent snowfall. The snowfall level descended down to 800 m. In southern and eastern regions, skies were variably cloudy. The wind was blowing at strong velocity in western and northern regions, in southeastern regions at moderate strength, from southwesterly directions. It was very gusty. Since Monday, there have been the following amounts of snowfall above approximately 2000 m: Lower Valais, northern Alpine Ridge from Chablais into the Jungfrau region, 40 to 70 cm; remaining Valais, remaining western part of the northern flank of the Alps, 20 to 40 cm; Upper Engadine, 15 to 30 cm; central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps and remaining Grisons, 5 to 10 cm. The snowfall was generally accompanied by strong velocity southwesterly winds. Avalanches can fracture from inside the layers of snowdrift. On north and east facing slopes above 2400 m, more than anywhere else, avalanches can also fracture inside the old snowpack, which is weak, particularly in the Valais and in the Gotthard region.

### Short-term development

Conditions on Friday will be characterised by an intense weather front of western exposure. By Friday evening, the following amounts of snowfall are anticipated above approximately 1800 m: Chablais to Great St. Bernard, 50 to 80 cm; remaining western part of the northern flank of the Alps, remaining Valais, Gotthard region, 30 to 50 cm; central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps, northern Grisons, northern Ticino, Upper Engadine, 15 to 30 cm; inneralpine regions of Grisons, 5 to 15 cm. The snowfall level will initially ascend to 1500 to 2000 m in the furthestmost western regions by Friday midday, then subsequently descend swiftly during the afternoon. The wind is expected to shift from southwesterly to westerly and will be blowing at storm strength in western and northern regions, in southeastern regions at strong velocity. Massive snowdrift accumulations are expected to form.

### Avalanche danger forecast for Friday

Vaud Alps; Gstaad; Lenk; northern Alpine Ridge from Chablais to the Grimsel; Valais:

#### *High avalanche danger (Level 4)*

From Chablais to the Great St. Bernard, as well as in the regions of Leysin, Villars, Ovronnaz and Montana, the avalanche prone locations are to be found on steep slopes of all expositions above 1800 m. Many medium sized, but also large sized naturally triggered avalanches can be expected. Exposed parts of transportation routes are endangered widespread.

In the remaining regions of this danger level, the avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on steep slopes of western to northern to southern exposition above approximately 2000 m. In all regions of this danger level, critical conditions prevail in outlying terrain away from secured transportation routes. Extensive experience in the evaluation of avalanche dangers, as well as great caution, are imperative.

Remaining western part of northern flank of the Alps; central and eastern parts of northern flank of the Alps; northern Ticino; Grisons not including the regions of Lower Engadine and Müntertal:

#### *Considerable avalanche danger (Level 3)*

The avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes of western to northern to southern exposition. In the indicated regions of the western part of the northern flank of the Alps, the danger zones are found above approximately 1800 m, in the remaining regions they are to be found above approximately 2000 m. Snowdrift accumulations can be triggered even by a single backcountry skier or freerider. During the course of the day, increasingly frequent naturally triggered avalanches are possible, which will be medium sized in western regions, in isolated cases also large sized, and small to medium sized in eastern regions. Extensive experience in the assessment of avalanche hazards is essential.

Central Ticino; Sotto Ceneri; Lower Engadine and Müntertal:

#### *Moderate avalanche danger (Level 2)*

The avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes of western to northern to southern exposition above approximately 2000 m. Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations can be easily triggered and should be evaluated with great care.

### Trend for Saturday and Sunday

On Saturday, the snowfall is expected to continue in northern regions. It will be cold. The wind will be blowing at strong velocity from northwesterly directions. In those regions where the avalanche danger is currently high, the avalanche hazards will subside somewhat on Saturday. On Sunday, conditions will be variable and it will remain cold. The wind will slacken off. On Sunday, the avalanche danger is expected to gradually recede throughout the Swiss Alps.

#### National avalanche bulletin as an MMS (Fr. 0.50/MMS)

Send an SMS with the corresponding key word to the speed dial number 162.

LAWINE overview of the keywords  
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#### Regional avalanche bulletins (Fr. 0.50/MMS)

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LAWNGR North and Central Grisons  
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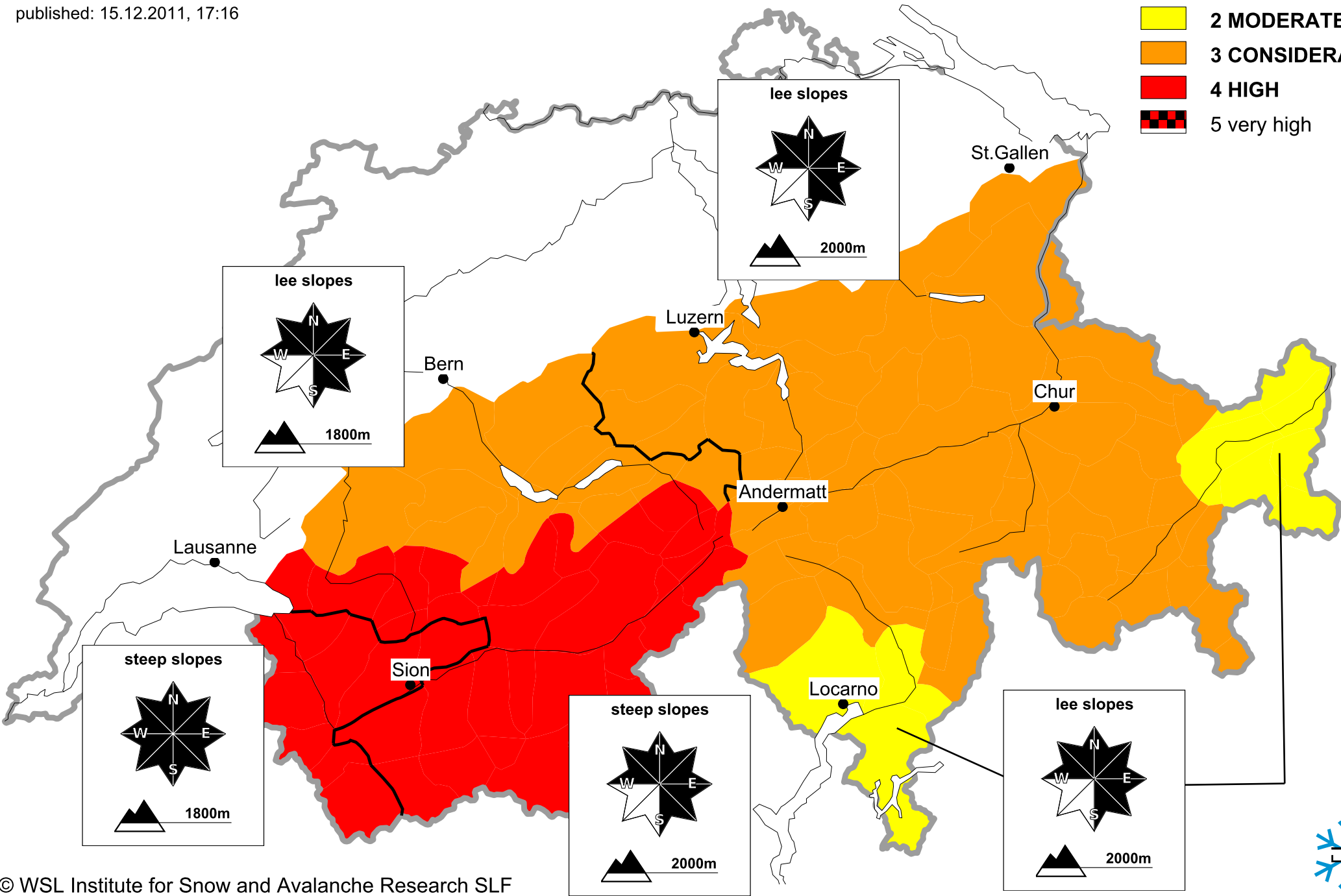
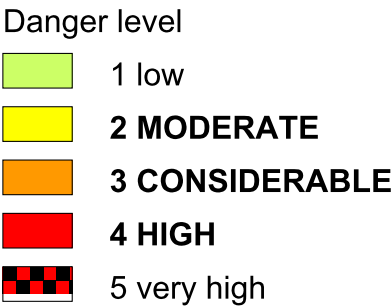
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