

# National avalanche bulletin no. 41

for Thursday, 5 January 2012

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## *Escalating avalanche danger accompanied by storm and snowfall*

### Current conditions

Between Tuesday night and Wednesday midday on the northern flank of the Alps, there was 5 to 15 cm of snowfall, in the remaining regions less. The midday temperatures at 2000 m were between minus 5 degrees in western regions and minus 3 degrees in eastern regions. The wind was blowing at strong to storm strength during the night, then slackened off in the course of the day to moderate to strong velocity from westerly directions.

On the northern flank of the Alps in particular, the snowpack is favourably structured. Nevertheless, in the uppermost layers of the snowpack the bonding between the various layers of fresh fallen snow and snowdrift is still inadequate in some places. Particularly on the Main Alpine Ridge and in the Engadine on shady slopes above 2500 m, faceted and trigger sensitive layers are evident inside the snowpack near the ground. This weakness has been confirmed by numerous avalanche triggerings in these layers.

### Short-term development

On Thursday, snowfall will set in. By evening on the northern flank of the Alps, in the Valais and in northern Grisons, 20 to 30 cm of new fallen snow is anticipated widespread; in the western part of Lower Valais and in the western part of the northern flank of the Alps, as much as 40 cm of fresh fallen snow is expected. In central Grisons and in the Engadine, 10 to 20 cm of snowfall is expected; further to the south, less. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be minus 4 degrees. The snowfall level is expected to temporarily ascend towards 1200 m. The storm velocity northwesterly wind will transport both new fallen and old snow intensively. Extensive snowdrift accumulations are expected to form widespread, some of which will be easily triggered.

### Avalanche danger forecast for Thursday

Northern flank of the Alps; Valais; central part of Main Alpine Ridge; Grisons excluding lower Val Calanca and lower Val Moesa:

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

On the northern flank of the Alps, the avalanche prone locations are to be found on steep slopes in all aspects above approximately 1600 m; in the Valais the danger zones are found on steep slopes in all aspects above approximately 1800 m. The extent and spread of avalanche prone locations will increase over the course of the day. Naturally triggered avalanches can be expected with increasing frequency and will attain medium size, in isolated cases even large size. For backcountry skiing and freeriding tours in outlying terrain away from secured ski runs, the situation is critical. All those without extensive experience in evaluating avalanche dangers should remain on the ski runs which have been secured.

On the Main Alpine Ridge of northern Ticino as well as in the indicated regions of Grisons, the avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in all aspects above approximately 1800 m. The extent and spread of avalanche prone locations will increase over the course of the day in these regions as well. Snowdrift accumulations can be easily triggered even by one single backcountry skier or freerider. In outlying terrain away from secured ski runs, caution is imperative.

In addition, on the Main Alpine Ridge and in the Upper Engadine, more than anywhere else, on shady slopes above approximately 2500 m, avalanches can be triggered even in deeply embedded layers inside the snowpack. These avalanche prone locations are difficult to recognize.

Upper Maggia valleys; lower Leventina; central Ticino; lower Val Calanca; lower Val Moesa:

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

The avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in all aspects above approximately 1800 m. Freshly formed and, to some extent, also older snowdrift accumulations are trigger sensitive, although in general they are small sized. Over the course of the day, the extent and spread of avalanche prone locations will increase. Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations should be evaluated with great care.

In all regions of the Swiss Alps below about 2000 m, full depth snowslides are possible.

### Trend for Friday and Saturday

On Friday, particularly in the central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps and in Grisons, heavy snowfall is anticipated from region to region. The northwesterly wind will continue to be blowing at storm strength. On Saturday, it will be heavily overcast in general and a small amount of snowfall is anticipated on the northern flank of the Alps in particular. In the furthestmost south, it will be rather sunny. On Friday, the avalanche danger is expected to escalate still further. On the northern flank of the Alps and in Grisons, more than anywhere else, the peril may reach danger level 4 (high).

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

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#### Regional avalanche bulletins (Fr. 0.50/MMS)

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LAWOVS Upper Valais  
LAWNGR North and Central Grisons  
LAWSGR South Grisons  
LAWBEO Bernese Oberland  
LAWEAN Eastern Part of the Northern Slope of the Alps

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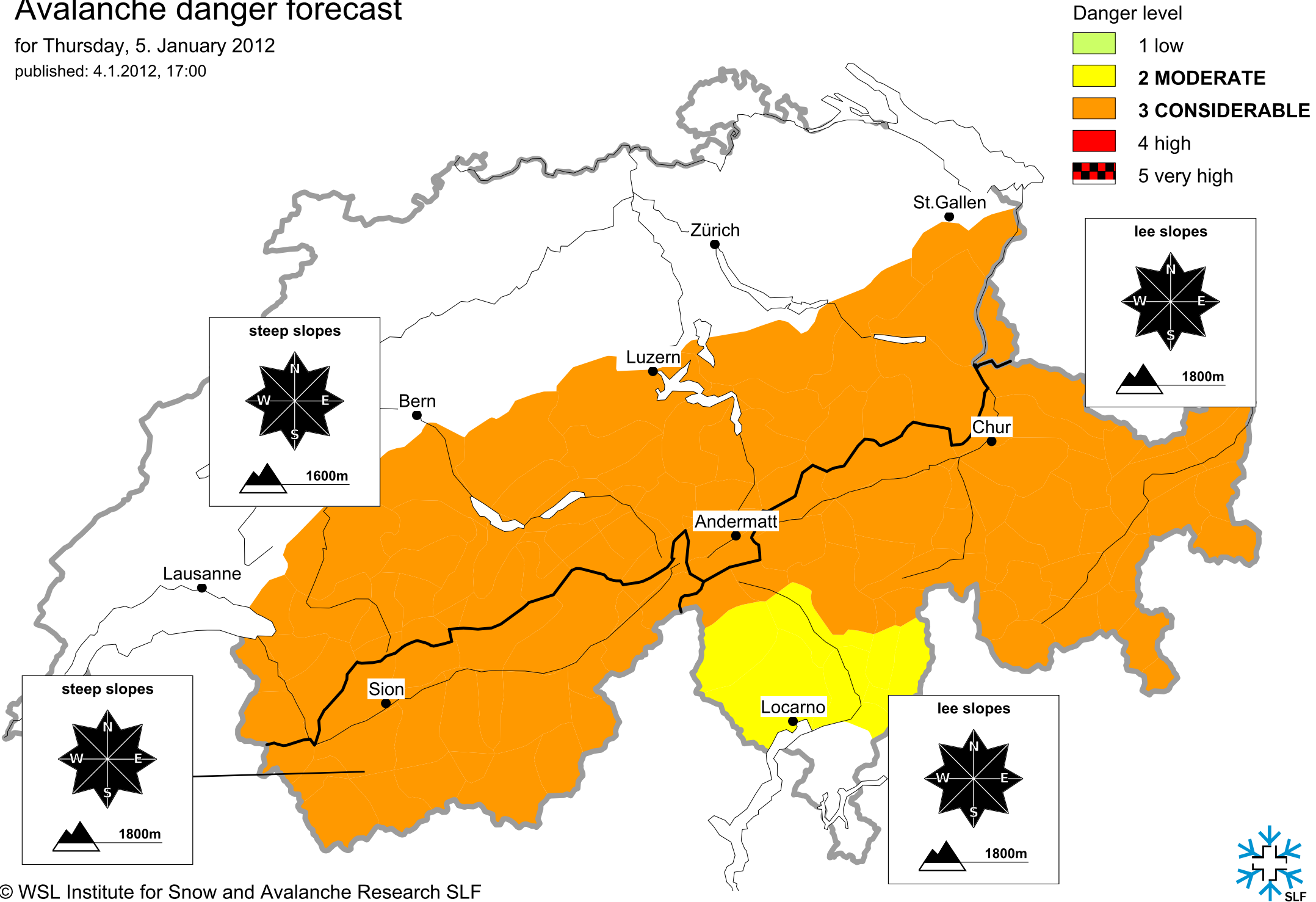
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