

National avalanche bulletin no. 81

for Tuesday, 14 February 2012

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Moderate avalanche danger - snow drift accumulations require caution

Current conditions

After a mostly clear night, the weather on Monday was cloudy, with some bright intervals, to very cloudy. During the night the wind remained strong at times on the northern flank of the Alps, but during the day it was light to moderate from the north. Midday temperatures at 2000 m were about minus 12 degrees in the north and minus 9 degrees in the south.

On the northern flank of the Alps in particular, and at high altitude in general, the snowpack has been influenced by the wind. Snow drift accumulations on the surface of the snowpack are prone to triggering in some cases. In places that are protected from the wind, the near-surface layers of the snowpack are faceted and, in some cases, very loosely bonded. Except in areas where the snow cover is shallow, the deeper layers of the snowpack are mostly favourable. The ground remains insulated by the thick snowpack. Individual full-depth avalanches can still occur.

Short-term development

On Monday night, a few centimetres of snow will fall in the eastern regions. On Tuesday there will be varying amounts of cloud in the north and it will be generally sunny on the southern flank of the Alps. The wind will be mostly moderate from the north. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be about minus 10 degrees.

Avalanche danger forecast for Tuesday

Entire region of the Swiss Alps:

Moderate avalanche danger (level 2)

The avalanche prone locations are to be found, in particular, on wind-loaded slopes of all aspects. They are to be found above approximately 1800 m on the northern flank of the Alps excluding Urseren, above approximately 2000 m in northern and central Grisons, Lower Engadine and Münstertal, and above approximately 2200 m in Valais, Urseren, the central part of the southern flank of the Alps, Upper Engadine, Bergell and Puschlav.

The main danger is posed by the snow drift accumulations of recent days. In many cases they are to be found where the slope angle changes abruptly, in gullies and bowls, and are to be evaluated with care and prudence.

Caution is to be exercised at transitions from a shallow to a deep snowpack, when entering gullies and bowls for example. The danger can be indicated by whumpfung sounds and the formation of shooting cracks when tracks are being made. Even in the case of relatively small snow drift accumulations, the danger of falling warrants caution as well. The prevalence of avalanche prone locations increases with altitude. Careful route selection is important.

On the main Alpine ridge and to the north in particular, isolated full-depth avalanches can occur below approximately 2400 m on west, south and east facing slopes. These can reach medium size. In isolated cases, exposed parts of transportation routes can be endangered. Caution is to be exercised in areas below glide cracks.

Trend for Wednesday and Thursday

Very strong winds from the northwest will bring snow, in particular between midday on Wednesday and midday on Thursday in the central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps. Large quantities will fall in some places. Temperatures will remain low on Wednesday, but rise a little on Thursday. The avalanche danger will increase significantly over a wide area.

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
LAWCHD national avalanche bulletin (german)

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Regional avalanche bulletins (Fr. 0.50/MMS)

LAWZCH Central Switzerland
LAWBVS Lower Valais / VD
LAWOVS Upper Valais
LAWNGR North and Central Grisons
LAWSGR South Grisons
LAWBEO Bernese Oberland
LAWEAN Eastern Part of the Northern Slope of the Alps

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

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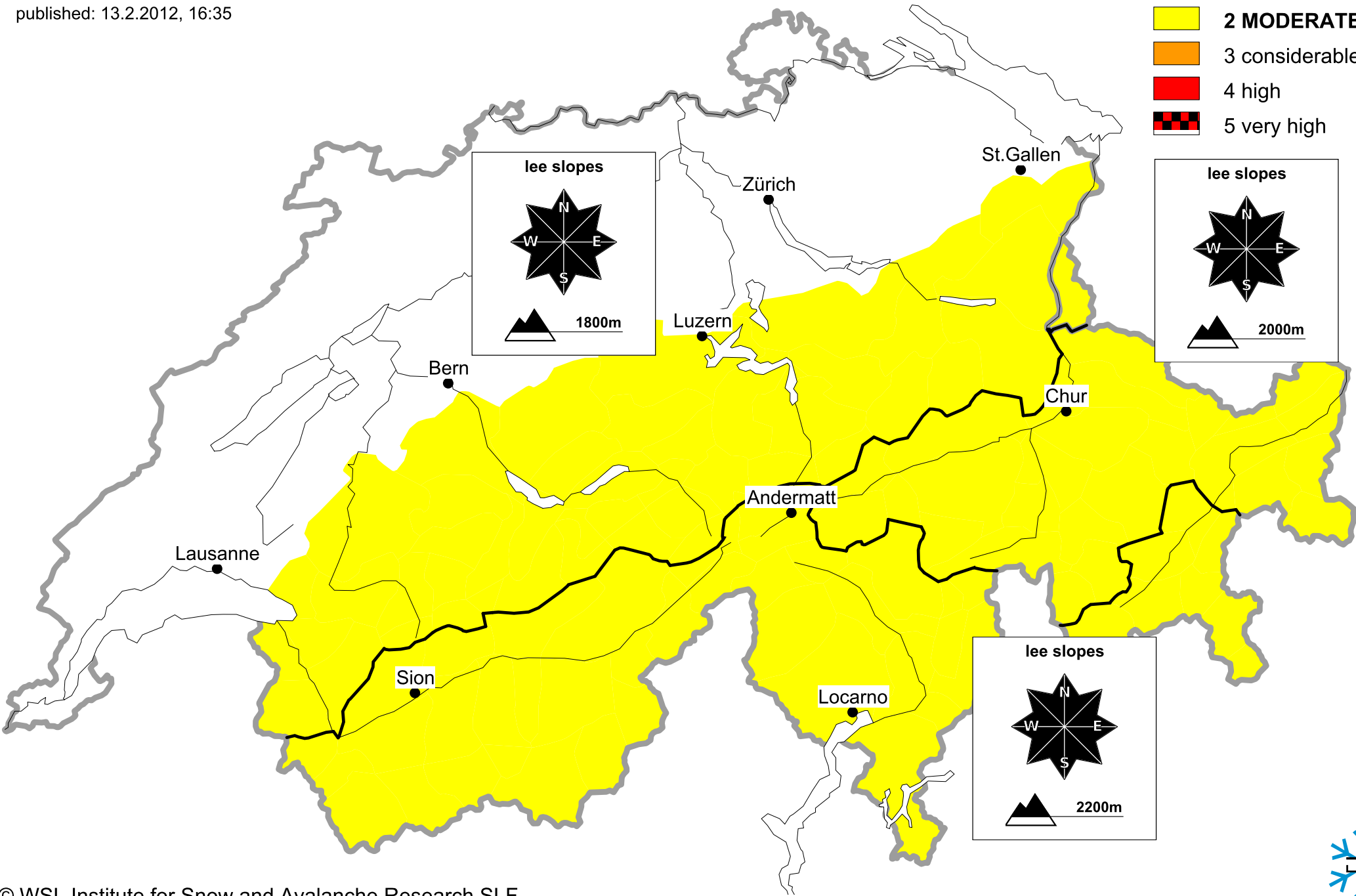
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