

National avalanche bulletin no. 83

for Thursday, 16 February 2012

issue date 15.2.2012, 18:30 hours

High avalanche danger in some regions

Current conditions

On Wednesday it was heavily overcast in general. In the central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps and in Prättigau, there was snowfall widespread, bringing 20 to 40 cm of new fallen snow; in the western part of the northern flank of the Alps, in northern Valais, in central Grisons and in the Lower Engadine, there was 10 to 30 cm of fresh fallen snow; further to the south, significantly less. The midday temperature at 2000 m was minus 7 degrees. The wind was blowing at strong to storm strength from the northwest and transported both new fallen and drifted snow intensely.

Fresh fallen and drifted snow have been deposited atop a snowpack surface which is either hard and heavily impacted by winds or on top of an old snowpack which is faceted and, in some places, loosely packed. The proneness to triggering of new fallen snow and snowdrift is high widespread.

Wherever the snowpack is deep, its lowermost layers are generally solid and stable. In the case of a deep snowpack, the ground tends to remain insulated. Full depth snowslides continue to be possible in isolated cases.

Short-term development

By Thursday evening in the central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps, in northern Grisons and in the Lower Engadine, an additional 10 to 20 cm of snowfall is anticipated; locally as much as 30 cm. In the remaining northern flank of the Alps, in northern Valais and in central Grisons, 5 to 15 cm of fresh fallen snow is expected; further to the south, significantly less. The heaviest snowfall will occur on Wednesday night. During the day on Thursday, bright intervals are expected to appear from the west towards the east in the inneralpine regions in particular. In the central part of the southern flank of the Alps, it will be predominantly sunny. The wind will be blowing at strong to storm velocity from northerly directions. Towards evening, the wind will slacken off. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be approximately minus 8 degrees.

Avalanche danger forecast for Thursday

Northern flank of the Alps east of the Wetterhorn; Calanda; Prättigau; Lower Engadine; Münstertal:

High avalanche danger (Level 4)

The avalanche prone locations are to be found on steep slopes in all aspects. In the indicated regions of the northern flank of the Alps, the danger zones are above approximately 1600 m; in the indicated regions of Grisons, they are above approximately 2000 m.

Avalanches can be easily triggered by backcountry skiers and freeriders. Remote triggerings and naturally triggered avalanches can be expected. Such avalanches will generally attain medium size. In outlying terrain away from secured ski runs, the situation is highly critical. Caution and restraint are imperative. Exposed sections of transportation routes can be placed at risk.

Remaining western part of northern flank of the Alps; Valais; northern Ticino; remaining northern Grisons; central Grisons; Upper Engadine; Val Calanca; Val Moesa; Bergell; Puschlav:

Considerable avalanche danger (Level 3)

The avalanche prone locations are to be found on steep slopes in all aspects. In the indicated regions of the northern flank of the Alps, the danger zones are above approximately 1600 m; in the remaining regions of this danger level they are above approximately 2000 m.

Particularly in places which have remained wind protected until now, for example near the treeline or widespread at intermediate or high altitudes of the inneralpine regions, both new fallen snow and snowdrift are highly trigger sensitive and can be easily released. Naturally triggered avalanches are possible. In outlying terrain away from secured ski runs, a great deal of experience in evaluating avalanche dangers as well as a high degree of caution are essential.

Central Ticino and Sotto Ceneri:

Moderate avalanche danger (Level 2)

The avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in all aspects above approximately 2000 m. Particularly the freshly formed snowdrift accumulations should be evaluated with great care.

On the Main Alpine Ridge and northwards thereof, more than anywhere else, below about 2400 m on west to south to east facing slopes, full depth snowslides are possible in isolated cases. These slides can reach medium size. In isolated cases, exposed sections of transportation routes can be placed at risk. Caution is urged below glide cracks in the snowpack.

Trend for Friday and Saturday

On Friday it will be rather sunny, on Saturday predominantly so. The wind will be blowing at light to moderate velocity. Temperatures are expected to increase noticeably. The avalanche danger will recede only incrementally.

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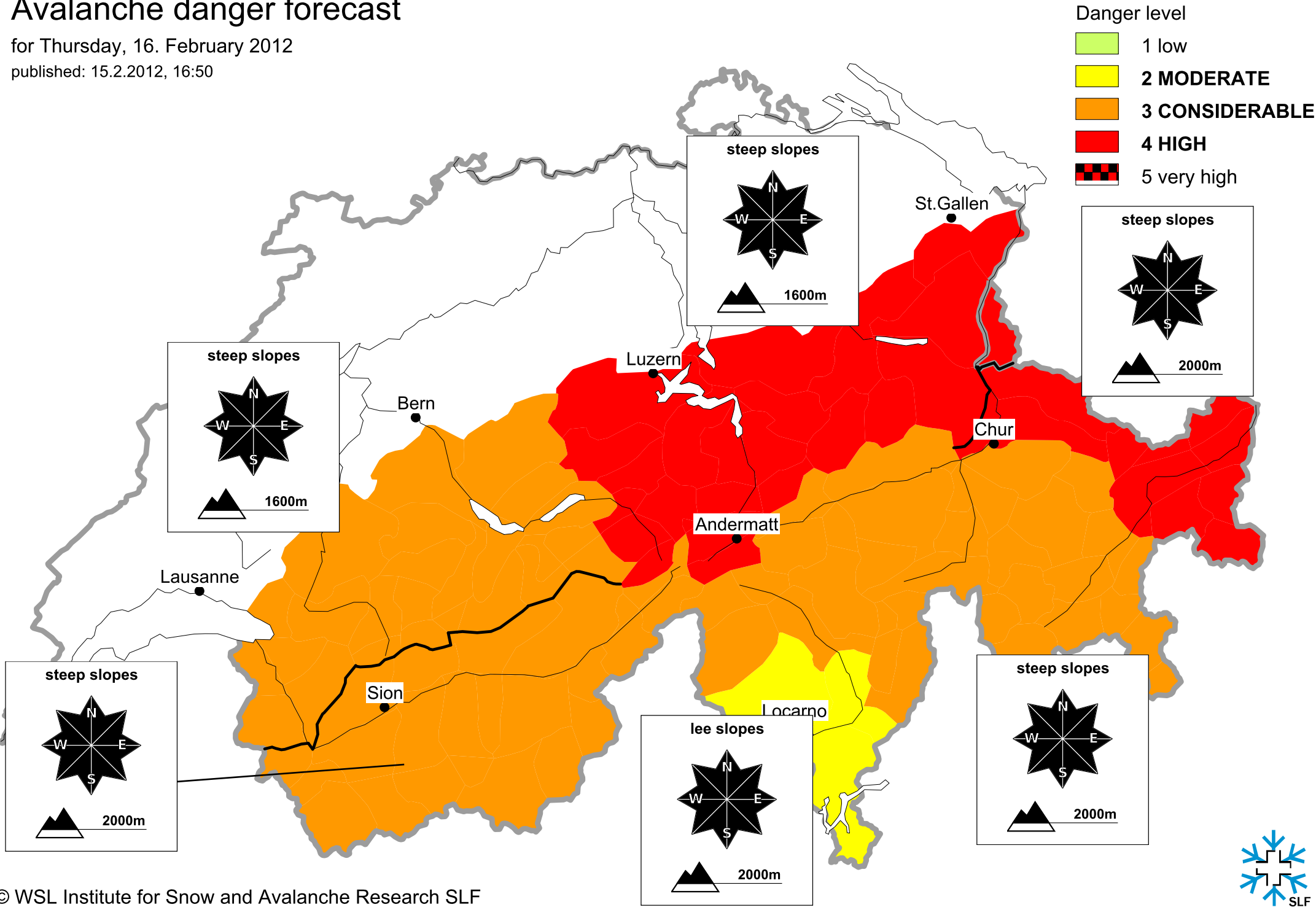
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Avalanche danger forecast

for Thursday, 16. February 2012

published: 15.2.2012, 16:50



Avalanche danger forecast

for Thursday, 16. February 2012

published: 16.2.2012, 07:56

