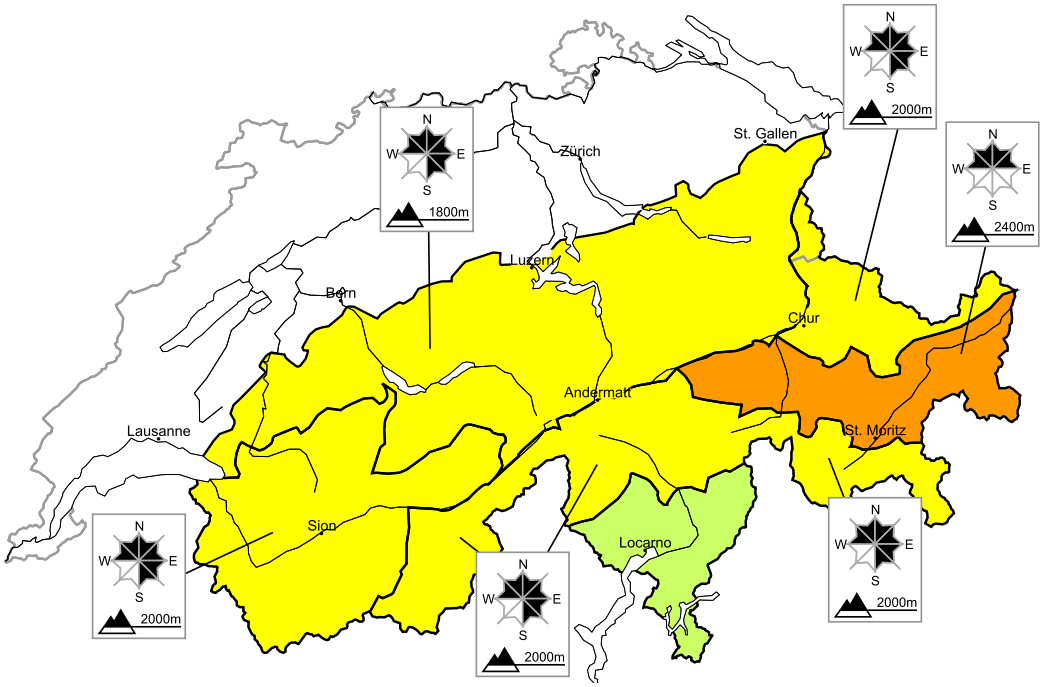
Increase in avalanche danger as a consequence of the strong wind

Edition: 20.2.2016, 08:00 / Next update: 20.2.2016, 17:00

Avalanche danger

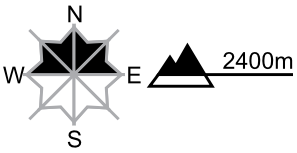
updated on 20.2.2016, 08:00



region A — Level 3, considerable

Old snow, snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

Avalanches can be released in near-ground layers and reach dangerously large size. The avalanche prone locations are to be found especially in shady places that are protected from the wind and at transitions into gullies and bowls. In little used backcountry terrain avalanche prone locations are more prevalent. Avalanches can be released by a single winter sport participant. Remote triggering is possible.
In addition, easily released snow drift accumulations will form. These are to be found adjacent to the ridge line in all aspects.
Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for experience in the assessment of avalanche danger and caution.

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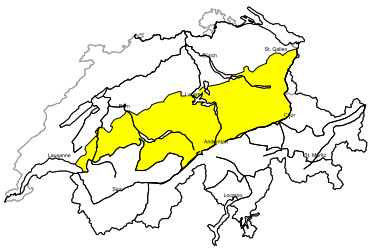
Avalanche bulletin for Saturday, 20 February 2016

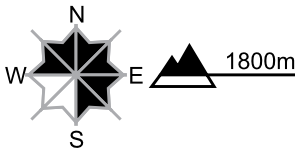
20.2.2016, 07:44

region B — Level 2, moderate



Snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



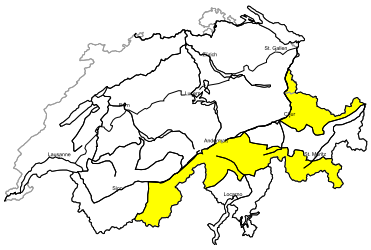
Danger description

Snow drift accumulations represent the main danger. The somewhat older snow drift accumulations are to be found adjacent to the ridge line in all aspects. They are in some cases still prone to triggering. As a consequence of the strong wind easily released snow drift accumulations will form. The number and size of avalanche prone locations will increase as the day progresses. In the afternoon danger level 3 (considerable) will be reached from the eastern Bernese Oberland to the Glarus Alps. Backcountry touring calls for experience in the assessment of avalanche danger and careful route selection.

Full-depth avalanches

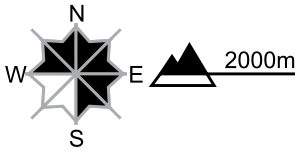
Full-depth avalanches are possible below approximately 2000 m. Areas with glide cracks are to be avoided.

region C — Level 2, moderate



Snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

As a consequence of the strong wind snow drift accumulations will form. These can be released easily. The number and size of avalanche prone locations will increase as the day progresses.
Additionally avalanches can also be released in near-ground layers and reach dangerously large size. These avalanche prone locations are rare. They are to be found in particular on wind-protected shady slopes and at transitions from a shallow to a deep snowpack. Remote triggering is possible in isolated cases.
Careful route selection and spacing between individuals are recommended.

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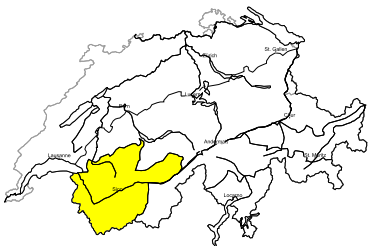
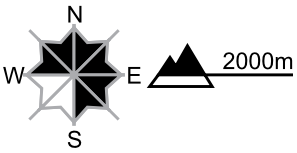
region D — Level 2, moderate



Snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



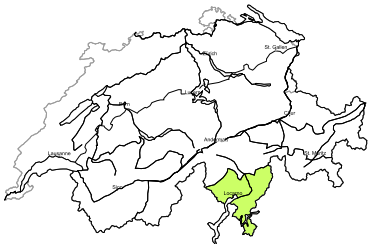
Danger description

Snow drift accumulations represent the main danger. The somewhat older snow drift accumulations are to be found adjacent to the ridge line in all aspects. They are in some cases still prone to triggering. As a consequence of the strong wind easily released snow drift accumulations will form. The number and size of avalanche prone locations will increase as the day progresses. The snow drift accumulations are to be avoided.

Full-depth avalanches

Full-depth avalanches are possible below approximately 2000 m. These can reach medium size. Areas with glide cracks are to be avoided.

region E — Level 1, low



Favourable situation

Individual avalanche prone locations are to be found especially on extremely steep slopes. Restraint should be exercised because avalanches can sweep people along and give rise to falls.

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Snowpack and weather

updated on 19.2.2016, 17:00

Snowpack

As a result of strong-velocity winds, snowdrift accumulations which are prone to triggering will form on Saturday. In northern regions as a result of the new fallen snow, these drifted masses are expected to expand in spread and grow in size. Snowdrift accumulations which are somewhat older are nonetheless still prone to triggering in some places. They tend to be relatively small-sized and lie deposited more than anywhere else in pass areas and in areas adjacent to ridgelines.
In Grisons, in the southern Valais and in Ticino, avalanches can be triggered from faceted and weakened ground-level and/or deeply embedded layers inside the snowpack. This hazard threatens primarily on west-facing, north-facing and east-facing slopes above approximately 2200 m. The inneralpine regions of Grisons are particularly at risk from this threat. In the regions of the west and the north where snowfall has been heaviest, the snowpack structure is often favourable; in other words, it is far less likely that avalanches will trigger from these deeply embedded layers.

Observed weather on Friday, 19.2.2016

In northern regions, skies were heavily overcast over widespread areas and there were some bouts of intermittent snowfall, bringing small amounts of fresh fallen snow. In southern regions it was quite sunny as a consequence of the northerly foehn winds.

Fresh snow
Northern flank of the Alps, western part of Lower Valais: 5 to 15 cm; in other regions, less; in southern regions it remained dry.

Temperature
At midday at 2000 m, between -9 °C in northern regions and -4 °C in southern regions.

Wind
- In northern regions winds were blowing from westerly directions, for the most part at light strength.
- In southern regions, winds were northerly, blowing at moderate strength.

Weather forecast through Saturday, 20.2.2016

In northern regions skies will be heavily overcast and some snowfall is anticipated during the course of the day. The snowfall level is expected to ascend in altitude during the afternoon from low lying areas up to nearly 1600 m. In southern regions it will be quite sunny.

Fresh snow
Between Friday evening and Saturday evening, the following amounts of fresh fallen snow are expected:
- northern flank of the Alps from the eastern Bernese Oberland as far as Liechtenstein, Prättigau, Silvretta, Samnaun: 10 to 20 cm; from the Blüemlisalp into the Glarner Alps: as much as 30 cm from region to region.
- remaining parts of western sector of the northern flank of the Alps, Valais, northern Ticino, remaining parts of northern and central Grisons, Engadine: 5 to 10 cm; in other regions, it is expected to remain dry.

Temperature
At 2000 m at midday in northern regions, -2 °C, noticeably warmer than on Friday; in southern regions, -5 °C.

Wind
Winds will be westerly to northwesterly, blowing for the most part at strong velocity.

Avalanche bulletin for Saturday, 20 February 2016

Outlook through Monday, 22.2.2016

On Saturday night in northern regions, the precipitation is expected to round to a close. During the day on Sunday, it will become sunny everywhere in Switzerland and very mild (the zero-degree level at 3000 m). On Monday it will once again be sunny, but somewhat colder. On both days winds will be westerly, blowing at strong velocity. The danger of dry avalanches is not expected to change significantly. Particularly in the regions of the west where snowfall has been heaviest, small to medium-sized gliding avalanches can trigger at any time of day or night As a result of the mild temperatures and particularly on Sunday following a night of predominantly overcast skies, moist sluffs, snowslides and small avalanches can also be expected on very steep, sun-bathed slopes.