Avalanche bulletin for Thursday, 2 February 2017

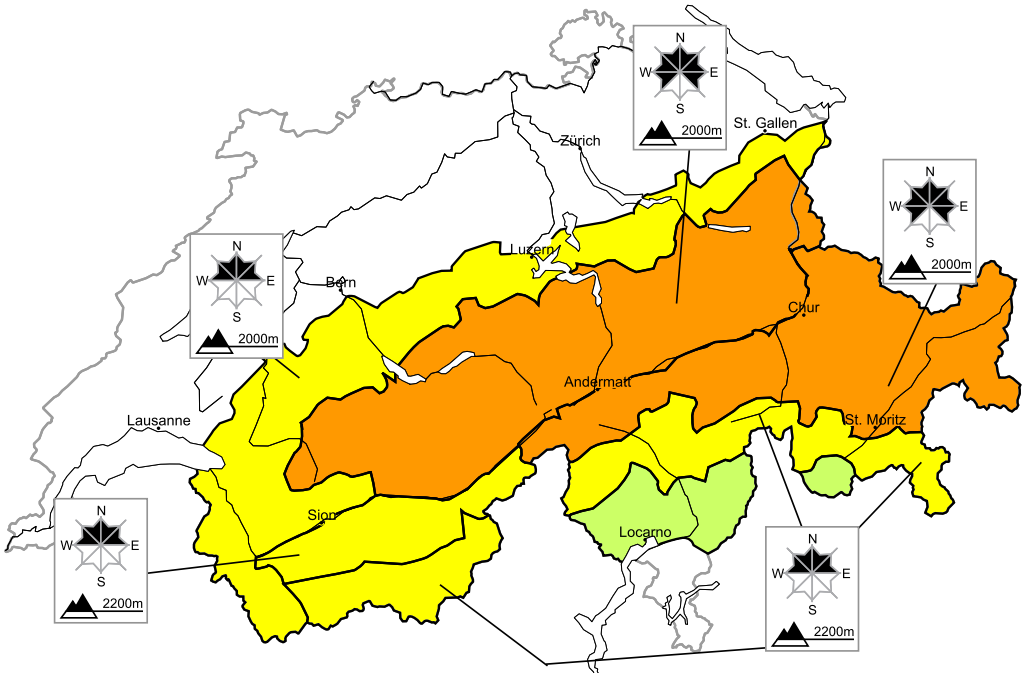
2.2.2017, 07:47

A precarious avalanche situation will be encountered over a wide area

Edition: 2.2.2017, 08:00 / Next update: 2.2.2017, 17:00

Avalanche danger

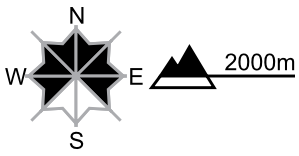
updated on 2.2.2017, 08:00



region A | **Level 3, considerable**

Fresh snow and snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

The fresh snow of the last few days is lying on top of a weakly bonded old snowpack. As a consequence of the southwesterly wind extensive snow drift accumulations will form. This applies in particular at elevated altitudes. The fresh snow drift accumulations are prone to triggering. On north facing slopes individual natural avalanches are to be expected. Single winter sport participants can release avalanches easily. These can penetrate deep layers and reach dangerously large size. Whumpfing sounds and the formation of shooting cracks when stepping on the snowpack can indicate the danger. Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for experience and restraint.

Wet and full-depth avalanches

Below approximately 2200 m more full-depth and wet avalanches are possible.

Danger levels 1 low | 2 moderate | 3 consider. | 4 high | 5 very high

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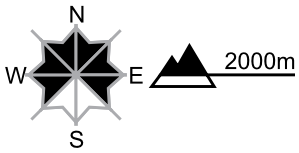
region B — Level 3, considerable

Fresh snow and snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

As a consequence of the southwesterly wind extensive snow drift accumulations will form. This applies in particular at elevated altitudes. The snow drift accumulations are prone to triggering. On north facing slopes individual natural avalanches are to be expected. Single winter sport participants can release avalanches. In particular in the central and eastern parts of the northern flank of the Alps these can reach dangerously large size. Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for experience and restraint.

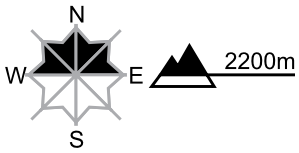
Wet and full-depth avalanches

Below approximately 2200 m more full-depth and wet avalanches are to be expected.

region C — Level 2, moderate

Old snow, snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

Distinct weak layers in the old snowpack can be released by a single winter sport participant in some places. This applies especially in little used backcountry terrain. The avalanche prone locations are difficult to recognise. Caution is to be exercised in particular at transitions from a shallow to a deep snowpack. Steep shady slopes are to be traversed by snow sport participants one at a time.

The fresh snow drift accumulations are mostly small but in some cases prone to triggering. They are to be avoided in steep terrain.

Wet and full-depth avalanches

Below approximately 2200 m more moist snow slides and avalanches are possible.

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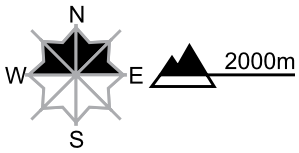
region D — Level 2, moderate

Snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



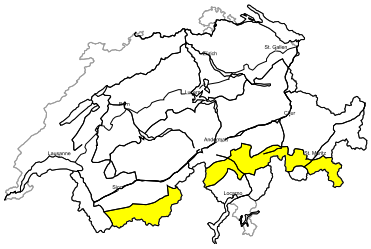
Danger description

As a consequence of the southwesterly wind clearly visible snow drift accumulations will form. This applies in particular at elevated altitudes. The snow drift accumulations are prone to triggering. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain. In isolated cases avalanches can penetrate deep layers and reach quite a large size. Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for careful route selection.

Wet and full-depth avalanches

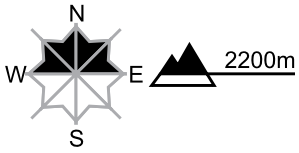
Below approximately 2400 m more full-depth and wet avalanches are possible.

region E — Level 2, moderate



Snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



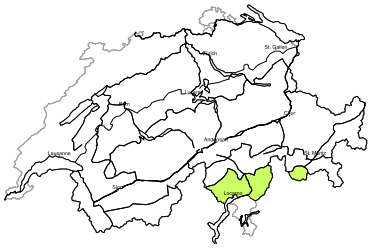
Danger description

As a consequence of the southwesterly wind snow drift accumulations will form. These are mostly small but prone to triggering. They are to be bypassed in steep terrain. In particular on steep north facing slopes the avalanches can penetrate even deep layers. Caution is to be exercised in particular at transitions into gullies and bowls.
Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for meticulous route selection.

Wet avalanches

Valais: Below approximately 2200 m more wet avalanches are possible, but they will be mostly small.

region F — Level 1, low



Favourable situation

Only a little snow is lying. Individual avalanche prone locations are to be found in particular in extremely steep terrain. Restraint should be exercised because avalanches can sweep people along and give rise to falls.

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Snowpack and weather

updated on 1.2.2017, 17:00

Snowpack

The southerly winds, and in northern regions foehn winds, will transport the new fallen snow from the last days intensively. The fresh fallen snow of this week has in many places been deposited on top of a snowpack surface which evidences intensive wind impact and on south-facing slopes frequently on top of a melt-freeze crust. In wind-protected, primarily north-facing terrain the wide-ranging surface hoar and loosely-packed snow on the surface have by and large been blanketed over. In those places the bonding between the fresh fallen snow and the old snow is inadequate. In addition, on north-facing slopes between 2000 and 2800 m, the lower-level, more deeply embedded layers inside the snow cover manifests markedly weakened layers. These weak layers can still be triggered in the inneralpine regions of the Valais and Grisons more than anywhere else.
Below 2200 m in western regions and below approximately 1800 m in the remaining regions of Switzerland, the snow cover has become wet or, at very least, superficially moist. In central Ticino and in Sotto Ceneri, as well as in southern Grisons, there is very little snow on the ground.

Observed weather on Wednesday, 1.2.2017

On Tuesday night there was snowfall everywhere in Switzerland except in the furthermost southern regions, and the snowfall was heavy in the northeastern parts of Grisons. During the course of the day the precipitation came to an end also in northeastern regions. In western regions it turned increasingly sunny.

Fresh snow

The snowfall level tended to vary greatly from region to region. In many regions of Switzerland the snowfall level ascended, at least temporarily, to approximately 1800 m; in western regions to 2200 m. In the interim there was snowfall down to below 1000 m in some places. Between Monday midday until the termination of this period of precipitation at midday on Wednesday, the following amounts of fresh fallen snow were registered above approximately 2200 m:

- central sector of the northern flank of the Alps not including Urseren, the eastern sector of the northern flank of the Alps, northern Grisons, northern Lower Engadine: 40 to 60 cm;
- Bernese Alps, northern Valais, eastern Lower Valais, remaining parts of the Gotthard region, northern parts of central Grisons, northern Upper Engadine, southern Lower Engadine: 20 to 40 cm;
- remaining regions of Switzerland, less than 20 cm; in the furthermost southern regions it remained dry.

Temperature

At midday at 2000 m, between +3 °C in northwestern regions and 0 °C in southern regions.

Wind

Winds last night were blowing at strong velocity from place to place, however in most regions at moderate strength from westerly to northwesterly directions.

Weather forecast through Thursday, 2.2.2017

On Wednesday night, foehn winds are expected to arise, which subsequently will intensify during the course of the day on Thursday. In the northern regions it will be partly sunny, in spite of intermediate-altitude cloudbanks. On the Main Alpine Ridge and southwards therefrom, skies will be heavily overcast and light snowfall is expected to set in.

Fresh snow

In southern regions above approximately 1300 m, only a few centimeters of fresh fallen snow is anticipated.

Temperature

At midday at 2000 m, between +4 °C in northern regions and -2 °C in southern regions.

Wind

- At high altitudes, increasingly strong westerly to southwesterly winds, to some extent blowing at storm strength in western regions during the afternoon;
- in the northern Alpine valleys, foehn winds are expected to set in during the night, then intensify to strong velocity during the daytime.

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Outlook through Saturday, 4.2.2017

Friday

In the early morning hours in central Valais and in northern regions, the final bright intervals will make themselves felt. In other regions of Switzerland, skies will be heavily overcast everywhere. The foehn wind will slacken off, but a persistently strong to storm-strength southly to southwesterly wind will continue blowing in the mountains. On the Main Alpine Ridge from the Upper Valais to the Bernina and southwards therefrom, persistent snowfall is anticipated, with the snowfall level at approximately 1000 m. The avalanche danger is expected to increase significantly in southern regions. In northern regions the avalanche danger will diminish somewhat, the situation will nevertheless remain treacherous.

Saturday

Skies will be overcast for the most part and above approximately 1400 m, intermittent snowfall is anticipated. Winds will shift to westerly and continue to be blowing at strong to storm velocity. The avalanche situation could increase somewhat in western and in southern regions. In the other regions of Switzerland, avalanche danger levels are not expected to change significantly.