Avalanche bulletin for Thursday, 23 February 2017

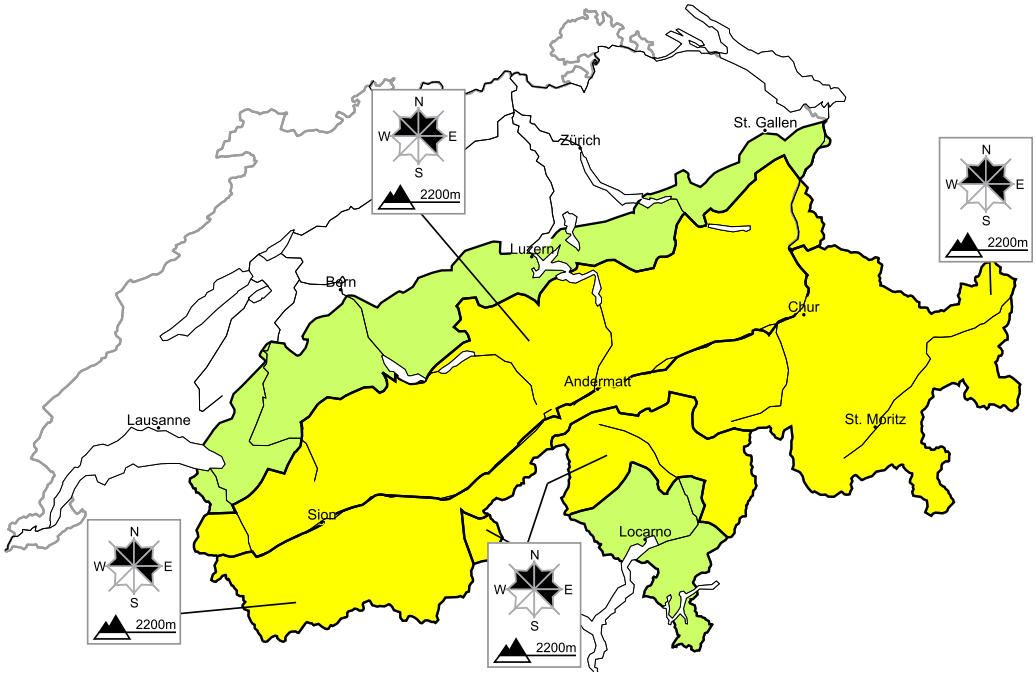
23.2.2017, 07:40

Moderate avalanche danger will be encountered over a wide area

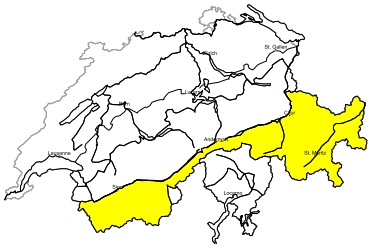
Edition: 23.2.2017, 08:00 / Next update: 23.2.2017, 17:00

Avalanche danger

updated on 23.2.2017, 08:00

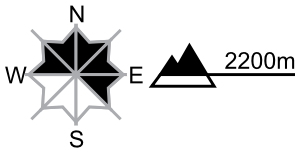


region A — Level 2, moderate



Old snow, snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

Weak layers deep in the old snowpack can be released by a single winter sport participant in some places in particular on shady slopes, especially in little used backcountry terrain. The avalanche prone locations are rare but barely recognisable, even to the trained eye. Avalanches can in isolated cases reach medium size. Fresh snow drift accumulations are to be found in particular adjacent to the ridge line in all aspects, especially at elevated altitudes. These are mostly small but in some cases prone to triggering. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence.
Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for defensive route selection. Maintaining distances between individuals and one-at-a-time descents are recommended.

Wet avalanches

Mostly small full-depth and wet avalanches are possible. This applies in particular on steep south facing slopes below approximately 2400 m.

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

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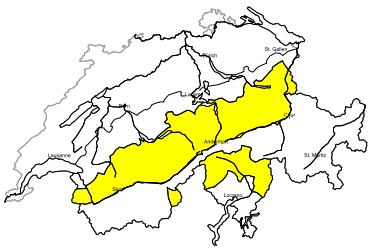
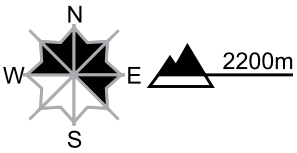
region B — Level 2, moderate



Snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



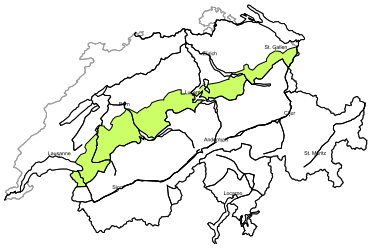
Danger description

The fresh and somewhat older snow drift accumulations are prone to triggering. They are to be found in particular in gullies and bowls, and behind abrupt changes in the terrain. Avalanche prone locations are to be found also adjacent to the ridge line in all aspects, in particular at elevated altitudes. Mostly avalanches are small but can be released in some cases even by a single winter sport participant. Careful route selection is recommended. The fresh snow drift accumulations are to be bypassed as far as possible.

Wet avalanches

Mostly small full-depth and wet avalanches are possible. This applies in particular on steep sunny slopes below approximately 2400 m.

region C — Level 1, low



Wet avalanches

Mostly small full-depth and wet avalanches are possible. This applies in particular on steep sunny slopes. Restraint should be exercised because avalanches can sweep people along and give rise to falls.

region D — Level 1, low

Old snow

Individual avalanche prone locations for dry avalanches are to be found in particular in extremely steep terrain. Apart from the danger of being buried, restraint should be exercised in particular in view of the danger of avalanches sweeping people along and giving rise to falls.

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Snowpack and weather

updated on 22.2.2017, 17:00

Snowpack

The snowpack surface shows striking impact from wind and rain over widespread areas. Particularly at high altitude, snowdrift accumulations are in the process of forming. The drifted masses are for the most part small-sized and hard. Both the freshly formed and somewhat older snowdrift accumulations are prone to triggering in some places.
As a result of mild weather and rainfall, the snowpack layers closest to the upper surface were moistened up to altitudes of 2000 to 2400 m on Tuesday. During nights when the skies are clear, these layers freeze to form a crust which is often capable of bearing loads.
More deeply embedded inside the snow cover at altitudes between 2200 m and 2800 m on wind-protected, shady slopes more than anywhere else, weakened layers are evident. This old-snow problem threatens particularly, i.e. is especially prone to triggering, in the inneralpine regions of the Valais and Grisons. However the likelihood of triggering and of a fracture propagating have diminished significantly. In these regions, as well as to a lesser degree in the remaining regions of Switzerland, it is particularly the shallow-snow zones or the transitions from shallow to deep snow which in isolated cases can still trigger avalanches that fracture down to lower-level layers of the snowpack.

Observed weather on Wednesday, 22.2.2017

On Tuesday night in eastern regions the precipitation came to an end. During the daytime on Wednesday it was predominantly sunny in the mountains, once the residual clouds dispersed.

Fresh snow

Between Monday evening and Wednesday morning, the following amounts of fresh fallen snow were registered:
· in the central and eastern sectors of the northern flank of the Alps, in northern Grisons and in Samnaun, 5 to 15 cm;
· in other regions on the northern flank of the Alps, less; or it remained dry.
The snowfall level was between 1500 and 2200 m for the most part, from region to region even higher.

Temperature

At midday at 2000 m, between +2 °C in northern regions and +5 °C in western and southern regions.

Wind

Winds were blowing from westerly directions,
· on the northern flank of the Alps and in the Valais at moderate-to-strong velocity;
· in other regions of Switzerland at light-to-moderate strength.

Weather forecast through Thursday, 23.2.2017

Following a night of predominantly clear skies, it will be mostly sunny in the mountains of the northern regions, only partly sunny on the southern flank of the Alps.

Fresh snow

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Temperature

At midday at 2000 m, between +6 °C in northeastern regions and +2 °C in southern regions.

Wind

Winds will be blowing at strong to storm-strength from westerly directions; in the afternoon in northern regions, foehn in some areas.

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Outlook through Saturday, 25.2.2017

Friday

Skies will be heavily overcast. In western and northern regions snowfall down to low lying areas is anticipated, particularly in the western part of Lower Valais and on the northern flank of the Alps. In the furthermost southern regions it will remain dry, accompanied by northerly winds. Strong to storm-strength westerly to northwesterly winds will be blowing in the mountains. With the exception of southern regions, avalanche danger is expected to increase over widespread areas.

Saturday

In northern regions it will be predominantly sunny in the early morning hours, apart from residual clouds and high altitude clouds during the daytime. In southern regions it will be sunny. Winds will be blowing mostly at moderate strength from northerly directions; in southern and eastern regions, winds will intermittently be blowing at strong velocity. The avalanche danger is expected to incrementally decrease.