

# Caution urged towards high altitude snowdrifts, daytime wet-snow avalanches

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## Avalanche danger

### Wet-snow avalanches

Following generally favourable conditions in the early morning hours, the danger of wet-snow avalanches increases significantly during the course of each day. As a result of daytime warming and solar radiation, wet-snow avalanches can be expected in all aspects. Below approximately 3000 m on north-facing slopes, these releases can in isolated cases sweep away the entire snowpack with them, particularly in the inneralpine regions of the Valais and Grisons. Ascents to mountain refuges and skiing and freeriding tours in outlying terrain should be initiated and terminated early in the day.

### Dry-snow avalanches

In high alpine regions, the major danger lies in the freshly formed and somewhat older snowdrift accumulations. These drifted masses tend to be small-sized, but in places are prone to triggering. The snowdrift accumulations should be evaluated with special caution.

## Snow and weather

### Snowpack

In high alpine regions the snow cover is still dry, particularly on north-facing slopes.

Below approximately 3000 m the snowpack to an increasing degree is thoroughly wet, including on north-facing slopes. Avalanches which trigger at altitudes between 2500 and 3000 m can in isolated cases sweep away the entire snowpack with them. This is particularly threatening in the inneralpine regions of the Valais and Grisons, where the deeply embedded layers of the snow cover are weakest.

The snow line on north-facing slopes is between 2000 m in northern regions and 2300 m in southern regions. On south-facing slopes it is at approximately 2700 m, but diverges starkly depending on the steepness of the slope.

### Weather review to Saturday, 20 May

On Saturday in southern regions, it was sunny, accompanied by northerly winds. In western regions it became increasingly sunny during the course of the day. In eastern regions skies remained heavily overcast and below approximately 1700 m there was a small amount of snowfall. Nocturnal skies Saturday night were clear in western and southern regions, overcast in eastern region. During the daytime on Sunday, it was sunny in western and southern regions, and became increasingly sunny in eastern regions. On Monday, following a night of clear skies, it was sunny, excluding some convective cloud build-up.

The zero-degree level on Saturday was at 2200 m and ascended on Sunday and Monday to 3000 m. Winds were blowing at moderate strength on Saturday, on the southern flank of the Alps intermittently at strong velocity, from northerly directions. Subsequently, the winds slackened off. On Sunday and Monday, a light to moderate-velocity southerly wind was blowing.

### Weather outlook through Wednesday, 24 May

On Monday night, skies are expected to be mostly clear. During the day on Tuesday it will be sunny, apart from some high-altitude cloudbanks and convective cloud build-up. On Wednesday in western and southern regions it will be predominantly sunny, following a night of clear skies. In eastern regions, following overcast nocturnal skies, it will be variably cloudy.

The zero-degree level will for the most part be at 3400 m, in eastern regions it will descend on Wednesday afternoon down to nearly 2800 m.

Winds on Tuesday will be light, blowing from westerly directions. On Wednesday in western regions, winds will be northerly, blowing at moderate strength, in eastern and southern regions blowing intermittently at strong velocity.

## Outlook

On Thursday and Friday, following nights of generally clear skies, it will be sunny by and large. The zero-degree level on each day will lie between 3400 m in eastern regions and 3800 m in western and southern regions. The danger of wet-snow avalanches will be the major threat. It is expected that this peril will increase significantly during the course of each day.

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