

Fresh snow in northern regions - beware fresh snowdrifts

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Avalanche danger

Northern flank of the Alps from the eastern Bernese Oberland to Liechtenstein, northern Grisons

Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations are the major danger. The avalanche prone locations are found particularly on north-facing slopes above approximately 2500 m and in all expositions in high alpine regions. Single mountain climbers can trigger avalanches in those places. Such unleashed avalanches can grow to formidable size and bury people in the central and eastern sectors of the northern flank of the Alps more than anywhere else. In the other regions of Switzerland, avalanches which are triggered will tend to be relatively small; thus, the major hazard which needs to be taken into consideration is of being swept along and forced to take a fall.

On steep south-facing slopes, moist sluffs can be expected as a result of solar radiation. On smooth, grass-covered slopes gliding snowlides are possible.

Remaining regions of Swiss Alps

Isolated avalanche prone locations are to be found in high alpine regions more than anywhere else. The freshly formed snowdrift accumulations, which are small-sized by and large, are prone to triggering in some places. They need to be evaluated with special caution in extremely steep terrain. The danger of being swept along and forced to take a fall needs to be given due consideration.

Snow and weather

Snowpack

Above approximately 2500 m in the major areas of precipitation, relatively large-sized (in the remaining regions only small-sized) snowdrift accumulations have been formed as a result of the westerly to northwesterly winds.

Prior to the snowfall on Friday, there was snow on the ground on north-facing slopes above approximately 2000 m on the northern flank of the Alps and in northern Grisons; and above approximately 2500 m over widespread areas, the rawness of the surface terrain was smoothed over. In the remaining regions and on south-facing slopes there was a cohesive area-wide snow cover mostly on glaciated high alpine terrain. In some areas on shady slopes, the old snowpack surfaces were faceted, thus forming a rather unfavourable base for the snowfall which subsequently occurred.

Weather review to Thursday, 26 October

On Thursday it was quite sunny. The zero-degree level in southern regions was over 4000 m, in northern regions it lay at 3800 m. A light to moderate-strength westerly wind was blowing over widespread areas.

On Friday morning in northern regions, precipitation set in and persisted throughout the day. The snowfall level descended from approximately 2700 m down to 2000 m by evening. Only in the furthestmost southern regions was it partially sunny. The westerly wind increased in velocity during Thursday night, reaching predominantly strong velocity by Friday morning. During the daytime on Friday, the wind shifted to northwesterly and was blowing at light to moderate strength in the furthestmost western regions, elsewhere mostly at strong velocity.

Weather outlook through Saturday, 28 October

On Friday evening, the snowfall is expected to come to an end in northern regions. The snowfall level will descend to 1600 m. On Saturday it will be predominantly sunny. The zero-degree level in western and in southern regions will be at approximately 3000 m, in eastern regions at 2000 m. In high alpine regions and in general in the south, a strong-velocity, intermittently storm-strength northwesterly wind will be blowing, which is expected to slacken off somewhat in western regions during the course of the day.

Overall, from Friday morning until the termination of precipitation on Friday night the following amounts of fresh snow are anticipated above approximately 2500 m:

- northern flank of the Alps from the eastern Bernese Oberland to Liechtenstein, northern Grisons: 10 to 20 cm; in the Urner and Glarner Alps as much as 30 cm;
- remaining sectors of the northern flank of the Alps, central Grisons: 5 to 10 cm;
- remaining regions of Switzerland: only a few centimeters; in the furthestmost southern regions, no snow whatsoever.

Outlook

On Sunday, snowfall is expected in northern regions more than anywhere else. The snowfall level will descend to 1500 m. In the other regions, skies will be partially overcast. In the furthestmost south it will be predominantly sunny. On Monday in northern regions, skies will frequently still be overcast, in the other regions it will become increasingly sunny.

On Sunday, the danger of dry-snow avalanches is not expected to change significantly. On Monday, the danger will decrease, but only slowly on north-facing slopes above approximately 2500 m. On Monday, furthermore, moist-snow sluffs are possible in isolated cases on steep, south-facing slopes. This applies in particular to those regions which have fresh snow.

Keep informed about the publication of unannounced Avalanche Bulletins. Activate in the App WhiteRisk the "Push Summer Bulletin". You can also subscribe to the SMS Service by sending an SMS "START SLF SOMMER" to Nr. 9234 (only Swiss cell phone providers) or unsubscribe by sending an SMS "STOP SLF SOMMER" (CHF 0.2/SMS).