Avalanche bulletin for Thursday, 21 December 2017

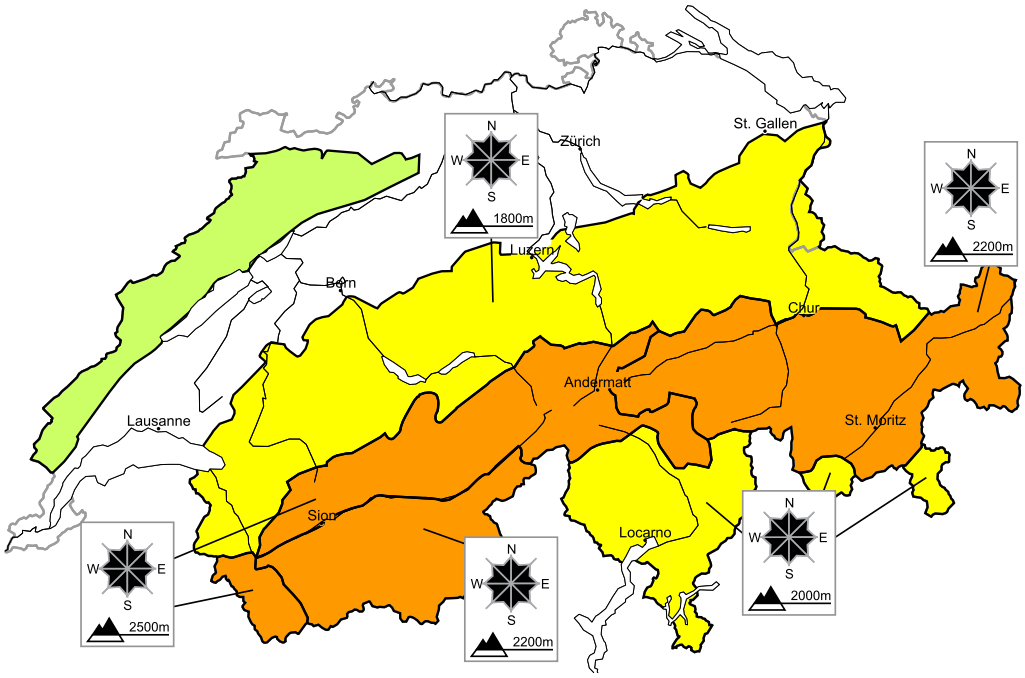
21.12.2017, 07:39

At intermediate altitudes a mostly favourable avalanche situation will prevail. Caution is to be exercised on wind-loaded slopes at elevated altitudes

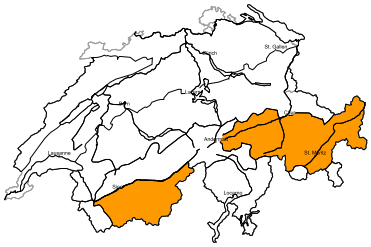
Edition: 21.12.2017, 08:00 / Next update: 21.12.2017, 17:00

Avalanche danger

updated on 21.12.2017, 08:00

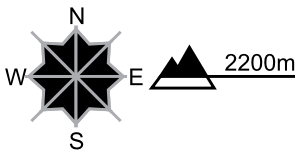


region A — Level 3, considerable



Old snow, snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

Single winter sport participants can release avalanches as before. These can be triggered in the old snowpack and reach dangerously large size. Caution is to be exercised at transitions from a shallow to a deep snowpack, when entering gullies and bowls for example. Whumpfing sounds and the formation of shooting cracks when stepping on the snowpack can indicate the danger.

As a consequence of the northerly wind clearly visible snow drift accumulations have formed. This applies in particular on south facing slopes at elevated altitudes. The fresh snow drift accumulations can be released by a single winter sport participant in some cases. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain. Experience in the assessment of avalanche danger is required.

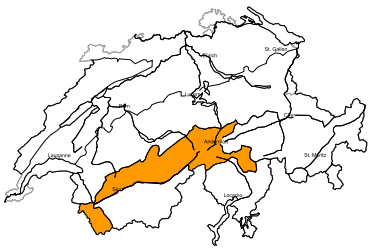
Danger levels 1 low | 2 moderate | 3 consider. | 4 high | 5 very high

WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF
www.slf.ch

Avalanche bulletin for Thursday, 21 December 2017

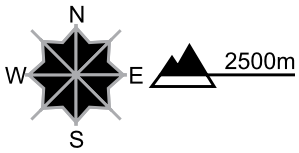
21.12.2017, 07:39

region B — Level 3, considerable



Snow drifts, old snow

Avalanche prone locations



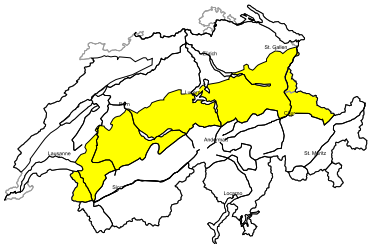
Danger description

As a consequence of the northerly wind clearly visible snow drift accumulations have formed. These can in some cases be released easily. The number and size of avalanche prone locations will increase with altitude. The fresh snow drift accumulations are to be avoided in steep terrain.
Avalanches can additionally be released in near-surface layers, mostly by large additional loads in isolated cases. This applies in particular in areas where the snow cover is rather shallow on very steep shady slopes.
Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for experience in the assessment of avalanche danger.

Full-depth avalanches

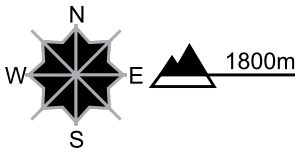
On steep grassy slopes small to medium-sized full-depth avalanches are to be expected. This applies in particular on steep east, south and west facing slopes below approximately 2400 m as well as on north facing slopes below approximately 2000 m. Areas with glide cracks are to be avoided as far as possible.

region C — Level 2, moderate



Old snow, snow drifts

Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

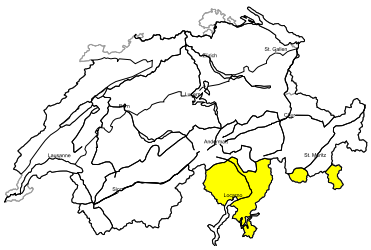
Avalanches can be released in near-surface layers, mostly by large additional loads in isolated cases. Caution is to be exercised in areas where the snow cover is rather shallow and on very steep shady slopes.
As a consequence of the northerly wind clearly visible snow drift accumulations have formed. This applies in particular on south facing slopes at high altitude. The snow drift accumulations are mostly small but can in some cases be released easily. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain. In high Alpine regions the snow drift accumulations are larger.

Full-depth avalanches

On steep grassy slopes small to medium-sized full-depth avalanches are to be expected. This applies in particular on steep east, south and west facing slopes below approximately 2400 m as well as on north facing slopes below approximately 2000 m. Areas with glide cracks are to be avoided as far as possible.

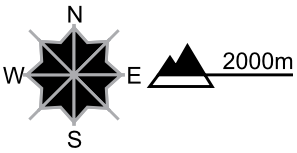
WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF
www.slf.ch

region D — Level 2, moderate



Old snow, snow drifts

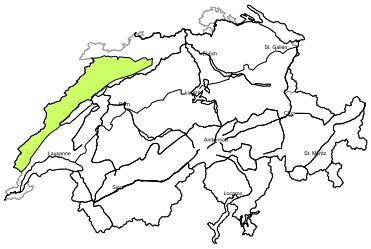
Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

As a consequence of the northerly wind clearly visible snow drift accumulations have formed, in particular on south facing slopes at high altitude. The fresh snow drift accumulations are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain.
Avalanches can additionally in isolated cases be released in the old snowpack, mostly by large additional loads. Caution is to be exercised in particular at transitions from a shallow to a deep snowpack. The avalanche prone locations are to be found in particular on very steep shady slopes. They are rare but barely recognisable, even to the trained eye. Defensive route selection is advisable.
Sotto Ceneri: Even in moderately steep terrain there is a danger of falling on the icy crust.

region E — Level 1, low



Snow drifts

Snow drift accumulations are in isolated cases prone to triggering. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in extreme 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.

WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF
www.slf.ch

Snowpack and weather

updated on 20.12.2017, 17:00

Snowpack

There is more snow on the ground than is customary for this juncture of the season in most regions, as much as double the amount on the northern flank of the Alps and in the northern part of Valais. In northern regions where snowfall has been heaviest, the enormous masses of fresh fallen snow from this last week have consolidated quite well. For the avalanche triggerings here, it was the superficial layers of fresh snow and freshly formed snowdrift accumulations, together with gliding avalanches, which stood in the foreground.
In the southern part of the Valais, in parts of Ticino, in central Grisons, in the Engadine and in the southern valleys of Grisons, the base of the snow cover is weak in some places. In these regions, fractures in the weak layers near to the ground are also possible.
As a result of northeasterly winds, fresh snowdrift accumulations formed anew on Tuesday. These drifted masses were deposited on top of loosely-packed old snow.

Observed weather on Wednesday, 20.12.2017

During the night in eastern regions, a small amount of snowfall was registered. During the daytime, it turned increasingly sunny in the mountains. In southern regions and in the Engadine, it was sunny all day long.

Fresh snow
In northern and eastern regions there were a few scattered snowflakes, most of which fell in the northern part of Upper Engadine, amounting to approximately 10 cm.

Temperature
At midday at 2000 m, between -3 °C in western regions and -6 °C in eastern regions.

Wind
- In high alpine regions of the northern part of the Alpine Ridge, as well as in the central and eastern sectors of the Main Alpine Ridge: strong-velocity northerly winds.
- In the remaining regions of Switzerland: light to moderate northerly winds; in the Jura region, moderate-strength bise wind.

Weather forecast through Thursday, 21.12.2017

In western and in southern regions it will be quite sunny to begin with. Cloud cover will move in during the afternoon, in western regions more than anywhere else. In northeastern regions, bright intervals are still anticipated during the morning, thereafter the cloud cover will become more dense. However, it is expected to remain dry for the most part.

Fresh snow
-

Temperature
Temperatures are expected to rise. The midday temperature at 2000 m will increase to -1 °C in northern regions and to +1 °C in southern regions.

Wind
Winds will shift from northeasterly to northerly and be blowing at light to moderate strength, at moderate to strong velocity in high alpine regions.

Avalanche bulletin for Thursday, 21 December 2017

Outlook through Saturday, 23.12.2017

Friday

In the northern regions and in Grisons, skies will be heavily overcast and a small amount of precipitation is anticipated in the central and eastern sectors of the northern flank of the Alps and in northern Grisons more than anywhere else. The snowfall level will ascend to approximately 1200 to 1500 m. In the southern Valais and in the southern regions of Switzerland, it will be quite sunny as a result of northerly winds. The danger of dry-snow avalanches could increase slightly in northeastern regions. In the other regions it is not expected to change significantly. Gliding avalanches and, in case of rainfall, also moist-snowslides continue to be possible.

Saturday

On Saturday in northern regions, it will continue to become sunnier. In southern regions it will be beautiful. During the course of the day in western and southern regions, temperatures will rise significantly. The danger of dry-snow avalanches will incrementally diminish. In the regions where snowfall has been heaviest, gliding avalanches continue to be possible.