Avalanche bulletin through Thursday, 16 May 2019

Dry avalanches at elevated altitudes, wet snow avalanches during the day

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Avalanche danger

Dry avalanches

In particular above approximately 2400 m, in some places avalanches can still be released in the near-surface layers of the snowpack.
On the northern Alpine ridge and in northern Grisons, where snow was still falling recently, the avalanche prone locations are most prevalent, and avalanches released here can reach quite a large size in isolated cases. The most precarious places are north facing slopes in the high Alpine regions. In the other regions the relatively recent layers, some of which remain prone to triggering, are mostly less widespread and thinner. The most favourable avalanche situation is to be encountered in southern Upper Valais, where no snow has fallen for quite some time. The danger of dry avalanches will continue to decrease in the period to Thursday. Careful route selection is recommended.

Wet snow avalanches

Under the influence of daytime warming and solar radiation, the danger of wet snow avalanches will increase during each of the coming days. Wet snow avalanches and gliding avalanches are possible in particular below approximately 3000 m on east, south and west facing slopes, and below approximately 2200 m on north facing slopes.

Snow and weather

Snowpack

At elevated altitudes, the snow cover is much deeper than usual at this time of year. On flat terrain at 2000 m, 2 to 3 m of snow is still lying on the northern flank of the Alps from the eastern Bernese Oberland to Liechtenstein, in the Gotthard region and in northern Grisons. Elsewhere over a wide area 1 to 2 m of snow is lying, but smaller amounts are to be found from southern Upper Valais via central Ticino into Engadine.
Last week's fresh snow and wind slab layers remain prone to triggering in some instances, on north facing slopes at elevated altitudes in particular. North facing slopes remain mostly dry above approximately 2400 m. In the other aspects and altitude zones, frequently clear skies and low temperatures in the coming nights will increase the stability of the wet snowpack. It will soften during each of the coming days.

Review of weather on Tuesday, 14.05.

After a frequently clear night, the west and south were sunny. In the east, convective cloud built up to an increasing extent. The midday temperature at 2000 m was between +6 °C in the southwest and -3 °C in the northeast. In the western part of the northern flank of the Alps and the central and eastern parts of the main Alpine ridge the wind was strong; in the other regions it was mostly moderate, from the northeast.

Weather outlook until Thursday, 16.05.

In the east Tuesday night will be frequently cloudy. A few snowflakes will fall in some localities. Otherwise the night will be mostly be clear. During the day it will be frequently cloudy in the east, convective cloud will build up in Ticino, and it will be mostly sunny in the west and in Valais. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be between +6 °C in the southwest and -3 °C in the northeast. In the north and at elevated altitudes there will be a strong easterly wind.
Wednesday night will become increasingly clear in the east; elsewhere it will be mostly clear. During the day it will be quite sunny with convective cloud in the afternoon. Isolated showers are possible in the south in particular. The midday temperature at 2000 m will be about +6 °C in the south and +3 °C in the north. The wind will ease significantly.

Outlook

Under the influence of a foehn wind, the north will be sunny at times on Friday and Saturday. The south will be frequently cloudy and snow will fall above 2000 m, in particular on Saturday. The amounts of precipitation remain uncertain. The danger of dry avalanches will change very little in the north. In the south it will increase at elevated altitudes; the increase on Saturday will probably be significant. Under the influence of warming during the day and solar radiation, wet snow avalanches and gliding avalanches are possible in the north in particular.

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