

Generally favourable avalanche situation in early morning, wet-snow avalanches in course of day

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Avalanche danger

Dry-snow avalanches

The danger of dry-snow avalanches is limited to the high alpine regions. The avalanche prone locations are to be found on very steep north-facing slopes more than anywhere else. In isolated cases, medium-sized avalanches can be released in the eastern sector of the Main Alpine Ridge more than anywhere else. In the other regions of Switzerland, the danger of being swept along and forced to take a fall remain at the forefront.

Wet-snow avalanches during the course of the day

As a result of the heightened temperatures, the melt-freeze crust tends to soften rapidly during the course of each day. Below approximately 3000 m, even higher up on sunny slopes, wet-snow and gliding avalanches can be expected as a result of the daytime warming and solar radiation. Particularly on high-altitude north-facing slopes, these releases can grow to large size.

Skiing tours and ascents to mountain refuges should be launched early and brought to an end early in the day.

Snow and weather

Snowpack

Dry snow on the snowpack surface is to be found only on steep north-facing slopes in the high alpine regions. The old snowpack on north facing slopes is thoroughly wet up to nearly 3000 m, in the other aspects the snowpack is wet even higher up. The snowpack surface tends to freeze above approximately 2500 m and form a crust capable of bearing loads during nights of clear skies, subsequently it softens up swiftly during the daytime.

In the Valais, in the northwestern Ticino, in the eastern sector of the northern flank of the Alps and in the Prättigau there is approximately 100 cm of snow on the ground, more from place to place. In the remaining regions of Switzerland there is 50 to 80 cm, less from place to place. Thus, there is less snow at high altitudes than is customary for this juncture of the season, with the exception of the furthestmost western regions of the Lower Valais.

Weather review to Tuesday, 19 May

On Tuesday it was predominantly sunny and warm. During the course of each day there was convective cloud build-up and there were local showers, particularly in the southeastern regions. Winds were blowing at light to moderate strength from northeasterly directions.

On Wednesday morning there were some cloudbanks evident. During the afternoon it was sunny, accompanied by some convective clouds. Winds were northeasterly, blowing at light to moderate strength, intermittently also at strong velocity at high altitudes.

The zero-degree level at midday on each day lay between 3600 m in the western regions and 3000 m in the eastern regions.

Weather outlook through Friday, 22 May

Following nights of predominantly clear skies it will be generally sunny on Ascension Day, and extremely mild. During the course of the day, convective cloud build-up is anticipated. Winds will be blowing at light to moderate strength from northeasterly directions. The zero-degree level will lie between 3600 m in the western regions and 3300 m in the eastern regions.

On Friday it will be generally sunny and warm to start with. During the course of the day, high and medium-altitude cloudbanks will move in from the west. As evening approaches, a small amount of precipitation cannot be ruled out. Winds will be blowing at light to moderate strength from western directions. The zero-degree level will lie between 3700 m in the western regions and 3400 m in the eastern regions.

Outlook

On Saturday it will be mild and, initially, quite sunny. During the course of the day, clouds will move in increasingly from the west and some rain showers or, in some regions, thunderstorms can also be expected. During the nocturnal hours on Saturday, the snowfall level will descend from approximately 3200 m down to 2200 m. On Sunday morning, the precipitation will come to an end and it will become predominantly sunny, but temperatures are expected to drop significantly.

On Saturday, following a night of only partially clear skies, the danger of wet-snow and gliding avalanches is expected to increase even more quickly than on the previous days. As a result of the rainfall, increasingly frequent wet-snow avalanches can be expected during the afternoon on north-facing slopes more than anywhere else. On Sunday, the danger of dry-snow avalanches will increase somewhat on north-facing slopes more than anywhere else. The danger of wet-snow avalanches will decrease somewhat as a result of the lower temperatures.

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).