

Snowfall in southern regions, rising avalanche danger levels

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Avalanche danger

Upper Valais sector of Main Alpine Ridge along Italian border, northern and central Ticino, Bernina region

Starting at midday on Saturday, avalanche danger levels will increase as a result of the snowfall. On Saturday night on west-to-north-to-east facing slopes above approximately 2200 m, avalanche level 3 ("Considerable") will be reached. The fresh fallen snow and the snowdrifts freshly generated by the southerly winds will be deposited on top of a shallow but in some places unfavourable snow cover. Avalanches can be triggered by one single winter sports enthusiast, including releases which attain medium size. On Sunday from Monte Rosa into the Simplon region, isolated naturally triggered avalanches are possible at elevated altitudes. Skiing and snowshoe tours in outlying terrain require experience in the assessment of avalanche dangers on-site.

Remaining regions of the Swiss Alps

Freshly generated snowdrift accumulations constitute the major danger. This is particularly the case on west-to-north-to-east facing slopes above approximately 2200 m. Already on Saturday, the southerly winds will to some extent transport the loose old snow so that in bowls and behind abrupt changes in the terrain small-sized snowdrift accumulations will be formed. On Sunday the snowdrift accumulations will continue to grow on the Main Alpine Ridge and southwards therefrom as the snowfall continues. The freshly generated snowdrift accumulations can frequently be triggered with great ease. They should be avoided in very steep terrain. The avalanches which are released will be predominantly small-sized. Apart from the risks of being buried in triggered snow masses, the dangers of being swept along and forced to take a fall need to be taken into consideration above all else.

Snow and weather

Snowpack

There is still relatively little snow on the ground. In the furthest western regions and in isolated northern places, backcountry tours with skis can be undertaken. This, however, is only the case when the ground surface is smooth or when the gullies are wind-loaded with drifts.

The snow cover is characterised by numerous shallow layers, and there are expansively metamorphosed (faceted) layers embedded on shady slopes above approximately 2200 m more than anywhere else. On the snowpack surface there is surface hoar in some places. For that reason, the fresh fallen snow is being deposited on top of a relatively unfavourable snowpack surface over widespread areas.

Weather review to Monday, 28 November

Between Tuesday and Friday the weather was frequently sunny, skies were overcast in some places. Above approximately 1200 m a total of 5 to 10 cm of fresh snow was registered, less in the southern regions. Winds were blowing at light to moderate strength, to start with from northeasterly directions, subsequently from southerly directions.

Weather outlook through Sunday, 4 December

On Saturday in the Grisons, bright intervals of foehn-induced skies are still anticipated, in the remaining regions of Switzerland skies will be heavily overcast. The southerly winds on Saturday will frequently be blowing at moderate strength, in some places of the central and eastern Alps at strong velocity. In the southern regions, light precipitation is expected to begin with, then starting at midday on Saturday the precipitation will become more intensive, falling as snow above 1000 to 1500 m. By Sunday evening, the following amounts of fresh fallen snow are anticipated:

- Upper Valais sector of Main Alpine Ridge along the Italian border, western part of Ticino: 30 to 40 cm; as much as 50 cm in place to place from Monte Rosa into the Simplon region;
- remaining sectors of the Main Alpine Ridge from Val Ferret into the Upper Engadine, eastern part of Ticino, Moesano: 10 to 30 cm;
- further to the north, only a small amount of snowfall is expected, or else it will remain dry.

Outlook

On Monday, skies will be heavily overcast. In the southern regions above 1000 to 1500 m, approximately 15 to 30 cm of fresh snowfall is anticipated, but these forecast amounts are still uncertain. In the northern regions only a small amount of snowfall is anticipated. Winds to start with will be blowing at moderate to strong velocity from southerly directions, subsequently at moderate strength from westerly directions. The avalanche danger levels are expected to still increase somewhat on the Main Alpine Ridge and southwards therefrom. Further to the north, no significant change is expected. On Tuesday it will be quite sunny, accompanied by light-to-moderate strength westerly winds. The danger of dry-snow avalanches will incrementally decrease. On the Main Alpine Ridge and southwards therefrom, moist slides can be expected as a result of the solar radiation.