Significant increase in avalanche danger in the west

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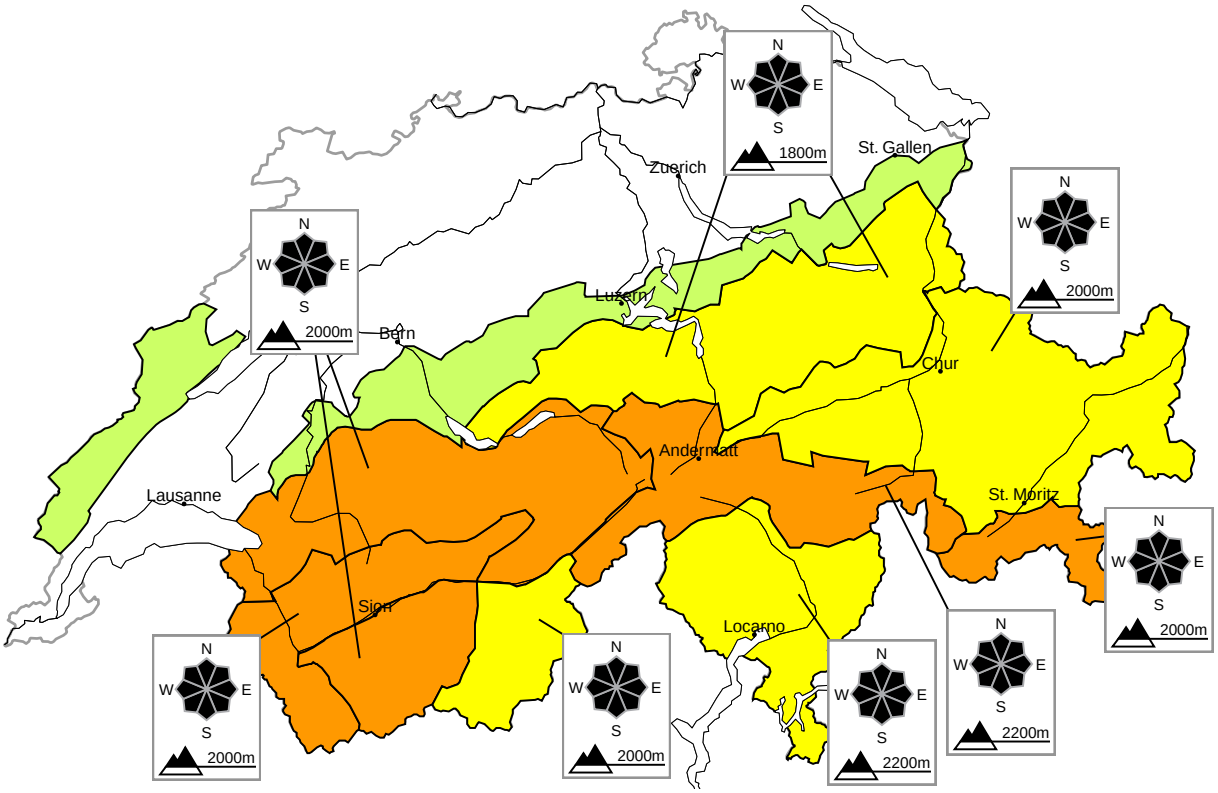
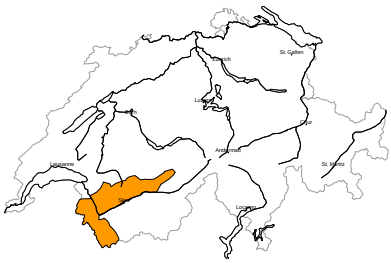
Avalanche danger

updated on 9.1.2023, 08:00

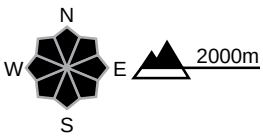


region A | **Considerable, Level 3+**



New snow, Old snow

Avalanche prone locations

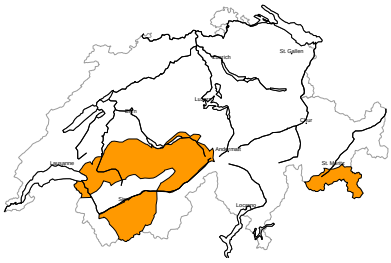


Danger description

Large quantities of fresh snow and the wind-drifted snow are lying on top of a weakly bonded old snowpack. Single winter sport participants can release avalanches easily, including large ones. Avalanches can in some cases release the entire snowpack. An increasing number of natural avalanches are to be expected.
In the afternoon danger level 4 (high) will be reached. The danger exists primarily in alpine snow sports terrain. Backcountry touring calls for extensive experience in the assessment of avalanche danger and restraint.

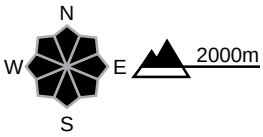
Danger levels 1 low 2 moderate 3 considerable 4 high 5 very high

region B — Considerable, Level 3=



Snow drift, Old snow

Avalanche prone locations

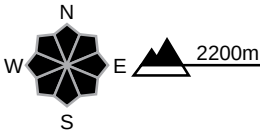


Danger description
The new snow and wind slabs are lying on top of a weakly bonded old snowpack. Single winter sport participants can release avalanches easily, including dangerously large ones. Avalanches can in some cases release the entire snowpack. Natural avalanches are possible.
Backcountry touring calls for experience in the assessment of avalanche danger and careful route selection.

region C — Considerable, Level 3-

Snow drift, Old snow

Avalanche prone locations

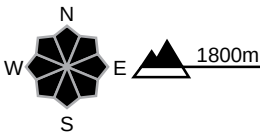


Danger description
As a consequence of new snow and a strong northwesterly wind, avalanche prone wind slabs will form. These are lying on top of a weakly bonded old snowpack. Single winter sport participants can release avalanches. Avalanches can in some cases release the entire snowpack and reach dangerously large size.
Backcountry touring calls for experience in the assessment of avalanche danger.

region D — Moderate, Level 2+

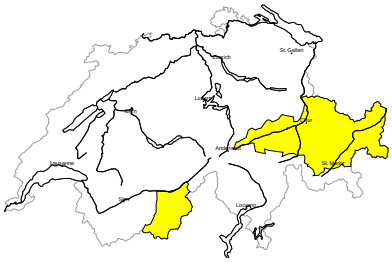
Snow drift, Old snow

Avalanche prone locations



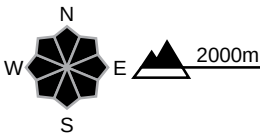
Danger description
As a consequence of new snow and a strong wind, wind slabs will form. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain. In the course of the day the wind slabs will increase in size.
Additionally in isolated cases avalanches can be released in the old snowpack and reach medium size. These avalanche prone locations are barely recognisable.
Defensive route selection is recommended.

region E — Moderate, Level 2+



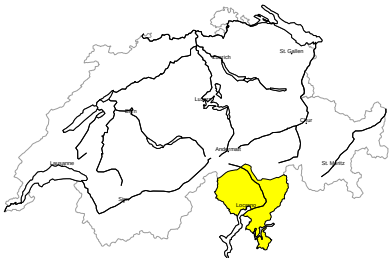
Old snow, Snow drift

Avalanche prone locations



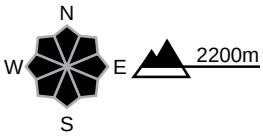
Danger description
In some places avalanches can be released in the old snowpack and reach dangerously large size. The prevalence of the avalanche prone locations will increase with altitude. They are barely recognisable.
As a consequence of new snow and a strong wind, avalanche prone wind slabs will form as well. In the course of the day these will increase in size additionally.
Backcountry touring and other off-piste activities call for defensive route selection.

region F — Moderate, Level 2+



Snow drift, Old snow

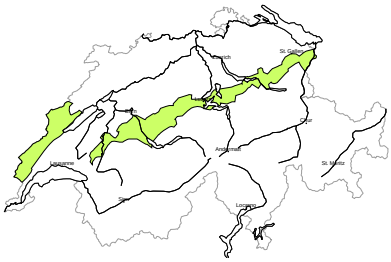
Avalanche prone locations



Danger description

As a consequence of a strong northerly wind, wind slabs will form in the course of the day in gullies and bowls and behind abrupt changes in the terrain. The wind slabs can in some cases be released easily. They are to be evaluated with care and prudence in steep terrain.
Avalanches can additionally in isolated cases be released in the weakly bonded old snow. They can reach medium size. These avalanche prone locations are rare but are barely recognisable. Their prevalence will increase with altitude.
Careful route selection is required.

region G — Low, Level 1



Snow drift

Only a little snow is lying. As a consequence of new snow and a strong wind, wind slabs will form. They are mostly small. The wind slabs are to be evaluated with care and prudence in very steep terrain. Even a small avalanche can sweep snow sport participants along and give rise to falls.

Snowpack and weather

updated on 8.1.2023, 17:00

Snowpack

As a consequence of fresh fallen snow and strong-velocity winds, far-reaching snowdrift accumulations are being generated in the western regions more than anywhere else. Fresh fallen snow and freshly generated snowdrift accumulations lie deposited on top of an unfavourable weak snow cover which is extraordinarily shallow for this juncture of the season. The old snowpack below 2200 to 2400 m manifests pronounced effects of higher temperatures and rainfall and, as a result of melt-freeze crusts, is also riddled with expansively metamorphosed (faceted) layers. At elevated altitudes the more deeply embedded layers inside the snowpack are frequently faceted and loosely-packed. This is the case on west-facing, north-facing and east-facing slopes above 2200 to 2400 m and on south-facing slopes above approximately 2700 m. In these zones, avalanches can fracture also inside the weak layers of the old snowpack and subsequently sweep away the entire snow cover. Below approximately 1700 m the fresh snow will in many regions be deposited on bare ground.

Observed weather review Sunday, 08.01.2023

During the nocturnal hours in the western and the southern regions, precipitation set in. During the daytime hours skies were heavily overcast and there was a small amount of precipitation over widespread areas. The snowfall level lay between 1000 and 1400 m.

Fresh snow
By Sunday afternoon, above approximately 1600 m:
- Lower Valais: 10 to 15 cm;
- central sector of the southern flank of the Alps, regions from Val Bregaglia as far as the Bernina: 5 to 10 cm;
- in the remaining regions of Switzerland, only a few centimetres.

Temperature
At midday at 2000 m, approximateely -2 °C.

Wind
Winds were blowing at moderate to strong velocity from southwesterly directions.

Weather forecast through Monday, 09.01.2023

Skies are expected to be predominantly overcast over widespread areas and precipitation is anticipated over far-reaching zones. The snowfall level will descend during the nighttime hours from approximately 1400 m down to low lying areas. As a result of the northwesterly winds which will arise, the zones on the southern flank of the Alps will be predominantly dry over the daytime and, particularly in the morning hours, partly sunny.

Fresh snow
Above approximately 1600 m:
- Chablais, Vaud Alps, northern and furthermost western Lower Valais: 30 to 50 cm; in the furthermost western regions up to 60 cm from place to place;
- western Jura region, Fribourg Alps, western part of Bernese Oberland, northern Alpine Ridge from the Wildstrubel as far as the Reuss, remaining parts of Lower Valais, from Val Bregaglia into Val Poschiavo: 20 to 30 cm;
- in the other regions of Switzerland, 10 to 20 cm over widespread areas.

Temperature
Temperatures are expected to drop. At midday at 2000 m to between -6 °C in the northern regions and -4 °C in the southern regions.

Wind
Winds will be blowing at strong velocity, in some high altitude regions at storm strength; during the nocturnal hours from the southwest, shifting from westerly to northwesterly directions during the daytime hours.

Avalanche bulletin for Monday, 9. January 2023

Outlook through Wednesday, 11.01.2023

Tuesday

On Monday night and during the morning hours on Tuesday in the northern regions, more snowfall is expected to fall down to low lying areas. The major thrust of the snowfall will extend into the regions from the eastern part of the Bernese Oberland into the Glarus Alps and to northern Grisons, where an additional 20 to 40 cm of fresh fallen snow is anticipated. During the daytime hours, the precipitation will slacken off and some bright intervals are expected. Winds will be blowing at strong velocity from northwesterly directions. In the furthermost southern regions it will remain dry, amid strong to storm-strength northerly winds, and quite sunny. The avalanche danger levels are expected to increase another notch. In the Lower Valais and on the northern Alpine Ridge, Danger Level 4 (high) will be reached. As a result of the shallow snowpack at low and intermediate altitudes, it is mainly the alpine snow-sports terrain which will be affected.

Wednesday

On Tuesday night a small amount of precipitation is anticipated, the snowfall level will rapidly ascend from the west up to nearly 1800 m. During the course of the day on Wednesday the precipitation will intensify once again and the snowfall level descend by evening to nearly 1200 m. In the furthermost western part of Lower Valais and on the northern flank of the Alps, an additional 15 to 30 cm of fresh snow is expected at high altitudes on Wednesday. Winds will be blowing at strong velocity from westerly directions. In the furthermost southern regions it will remain dry and there will be some bright intervals.
The avalanche danger situation will continue to remain very critical.