

Avalanche News

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Saturday, 29.11.2008, at 07:30



BEWARE FRESHLY FORMED, HIGHLY TRIGGER SENSITIVE SNOWDRIFT ACCUMULATIONS!

AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche danger in Tyrol's mountain regions has escalated to "considerable" (Level 3) above 2100 m. The cause of this is the recent formation of snowdrift accumulations brought about by strong southerly winds, particularly on west to north to east facing slopes, as well as in areas adjacent to ridge lines. The snowdrift is poorly bonded to the old snowpack, making its trigger sensitivity relatively high. Thus, in coming days on steep, wind loaded slopes, slab avalanches can easily be triggered by minimum additional loading, i.e. even a single backcountry skier. By the same token, anticipating further snowfall in East Tyrol and along the Main Alpine Ridge and storm strength winds, isolated natural avalanches are possible on very steep, shady slopes adjacent to the ridge lines above approximately 2300 m. At lower altitudes, caution must ongoingly be exercised towards snowslides on steep grassy slopes, particularly in areas with lots of snow.

SNOW LAYERING

Whereas over the last 24 hours, it has snowed 10-35 cm in East Tyrol, the southern Ötztal and Stubai Alps and in the Zillertal Alps, amid strong winds, the most snow has fallen in southern East Tyrol. In general, the old snowpack has consolidated quite well since the recent snowfall. Great caution must be exercised towards the freshly formed snowdrift accumulations. Through the old snowpack's ongoing exposure to low temperatures, generally loosely packed, sometimes even faceted snow crystals have formed on the old snow surface, atop of which surface hoar is often to be found. The bonding of the snowdrift to the old snowpack is highly unfavourable. In high alpine regions along the Main Alpine Ridge, furthermore, there has been a layer of depth hoar near the ground since early winter, which can serve as a bed surface for slab avalanches on steep west-northwest to north to east-northeast facing slopes.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

The front side of a powerful low pressure zone over western Europe will bring alternately moist, then dry air masses to the Alps over coming days. At the same time, southerly foehn winds will rise in intensity in many places until Sunday. The cloudbanks will often disperse and create bright spells, producing pleasant but increasingly windy mountain weather conditions. The southerly winds at high altitudes will increase in strength during the afternoon and attain storm strength during the night. Temperatures at 2000 m: minus 3 degrees, at 3000 m: minus 9 degrees. Strong to stormy southwesterly winds.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

The snowdrift accumulations which have formed over the last few days and are still forming will remain extremely prone to triggering. Wind loaded, steep slopes should be uncompromisingly avoided by backcountry skiers and freeriders over the coming days. The next information on the avalanche situation will be published whenever there are significant changes in the situation, at the latest in the beginning of next week.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe