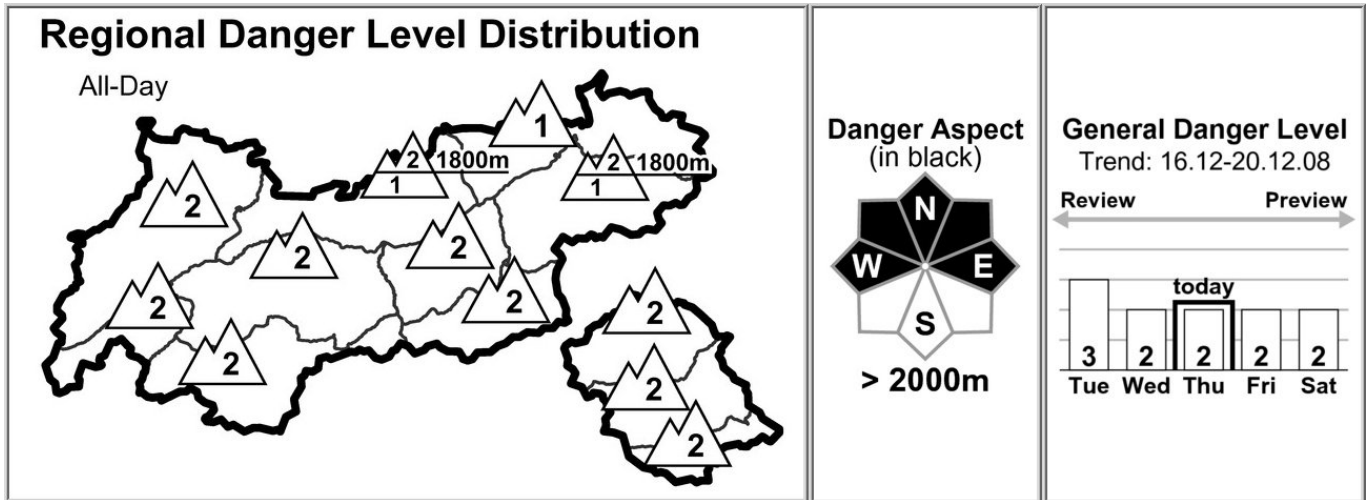


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Thursday, 18.12.2008, at 07:30



FULL DEPTH SNOWSLIDES STILL THE MAJOR HAZARD IN SOUTHERN REGIONS

AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche danger is moderate widespread, in northern regions generally low, at least below the treeline. The major hazard still stems primarily from the full depth snowslides in southern regions, namely East Tyrol and the southern Ötztal, Stubai and Zillertal Alps. Such avalanches are released directly from a very steep, slippery base down to the valley and, unlike classic slab avalanches, are not influenced by additional loading. A further danger comes from the snowdrift accumulations which have formed over the last week. They are increasingly to be found on west to north to east facing slopes and in areas adjacent to ridge lines above approximately 2000 m. Isolated snowdrift accumulations in transition areas from little to lots of snow on very steep slopes can be triggered even by a single backcountry skier or freerider. Excluding these spots, large additional loading is now required to trigger avalanches. In high alpine regions, wind crusts are found increasingly, which are far harder to disturb.

SNOW LAYERING

It began to snow during the night. In North Tirol there was generally 5 to 10 cm of new snow, in northern East Tyrol only a few centimeters. At the same time, temperatures dropped, the winds slackened off and shifted to northerly. The snowpack is favourably layered in general. Especially weak layers for slab avalanches are to be found directly beneath the freshly formed snowdrift masses, although the bonding of the snowdrift to potential bed surfaces has now improved greatly. In high alpine regions there is still a fundament of depth hoar along the Main Alpine Ridge, having formed in early winter, but which can now serve as a bed surface only in exceptional situations.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

A low pressure front over the Mediterranean is supplying moist air masses to the Alps from the northeast, and northerly foehn winds to the southern flank of the Alps. On the northern flank and along the Main Alpine Ridge, fog and light snowfall impede much of the visibility. On the southern flank of the Alps, the strong northerly winds will scatter most of the clouds over the peaks. Temperature at 2000 : minus 8 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 13 degrees. Strong northerly winds.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

Increasing avalanche danger due to rising northerly winds and heavy snowfall in northern regions.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe