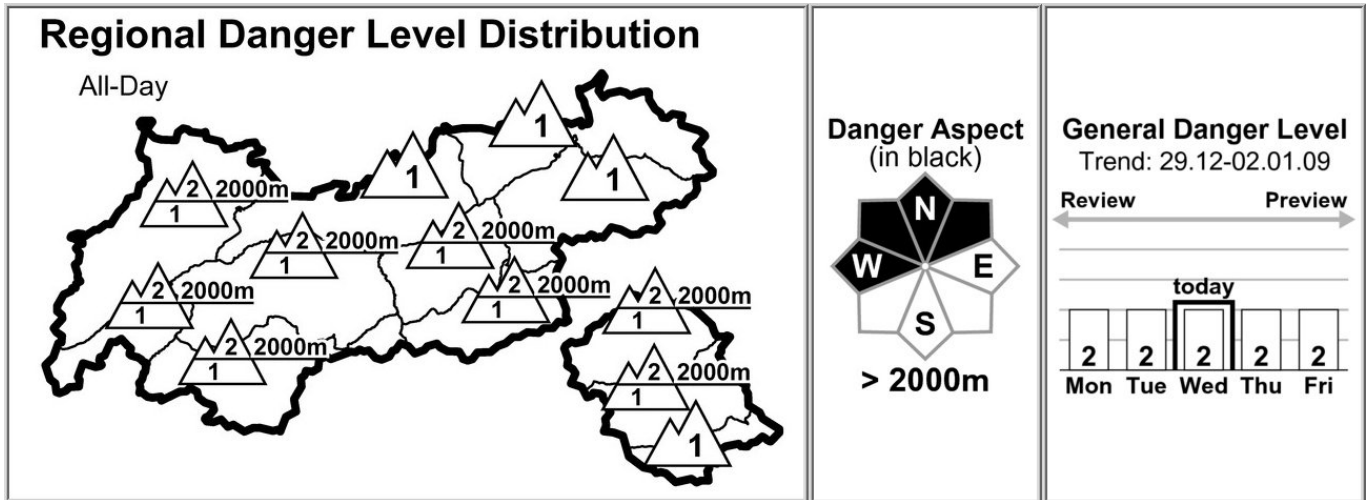


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Wednesday, 31.12.2008, at 07:30



FAVOURABLE TOURING CONDITIONS. BEWARE SMALL SNOWDRIFT MASSES ABOVE 2000 M.

AVALANCHE DANGER

Far and wide, favourable conditions prevail. In the northern Alps, the Kitzbühel Alps and the East Tyrolean Dolomites, the hazards can now be generally categorised as low. In the remaining regions above approximately 2000 m, moderate danger prevails, whereas below that altitude the danger is low. Backcountry skiers and freeriders should exercise caution primarily towards recently formed snowdrift accumulations, which are usually small in breadth and not deep, making them easy to recognize for those with some experience. They become increasingly frequent with rising altitude and are to be found primarily in areas adjacent to ridge lines and below rocky edges above approximately 2000 m on west to north to northeast facing slopes. In high alpine regions, that is, above 3000 m, isolated slab avalanches can still be triggered by large additional loading on shady, extremely steep slopes and especially in transitions from little to lots of snow. Equally, though only in very isolated cases, full depth snowslides are still possible on steep, grassy hillsides.

SNOW LAYERING

In low lying areas and at intermediate altitudes on shady slopes, surface hoar is now forming in many places. Through the influence of foehn winds, particularly in those areas typically subject to them, small sized snowdrift masses will form again today. These masses, particularly atop surface hoar or else where hard melt freeze crusts have formed (which can be found up to approximately 2200 m) are poorly bonded. Elsewhere the bonding of snowdrift to the snowpack is improving day by day, due to the higher temperatures. The snow quality is suffering from wind influence, however. Powder snow can be found primarily in areas near the treeline. On very steep, sunny slopes, a thin melt freeze crust has formed; at higher altitudes, often a thin wind crust. At higher altitudes, in addition, a layer of depth hoar from early winter is embedded in the snowpack near the ground.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

Weather situation: a small low pressure zone is approaching from France, which will provide an interruption to the stable, high pressure zone weather conditions over New Year's Eve. Thereafter, cold air masses from the north will sweep incrementally over the Alps. Mountain weather today: very good weather for backcountry skiers and freeriders, outstanding visibility, strong southerly winds in those areas subject to foehn influence. The freezing level will be at 1700 m at midday. In the afternoon, high altitude clouds will move in from the west, but will become dense only after sundown. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 2 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 8 degrees. Moderate southwesterly winds, in foehn areas the winds will be brisk to strong.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

Ongoing favourable touring conditions.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe