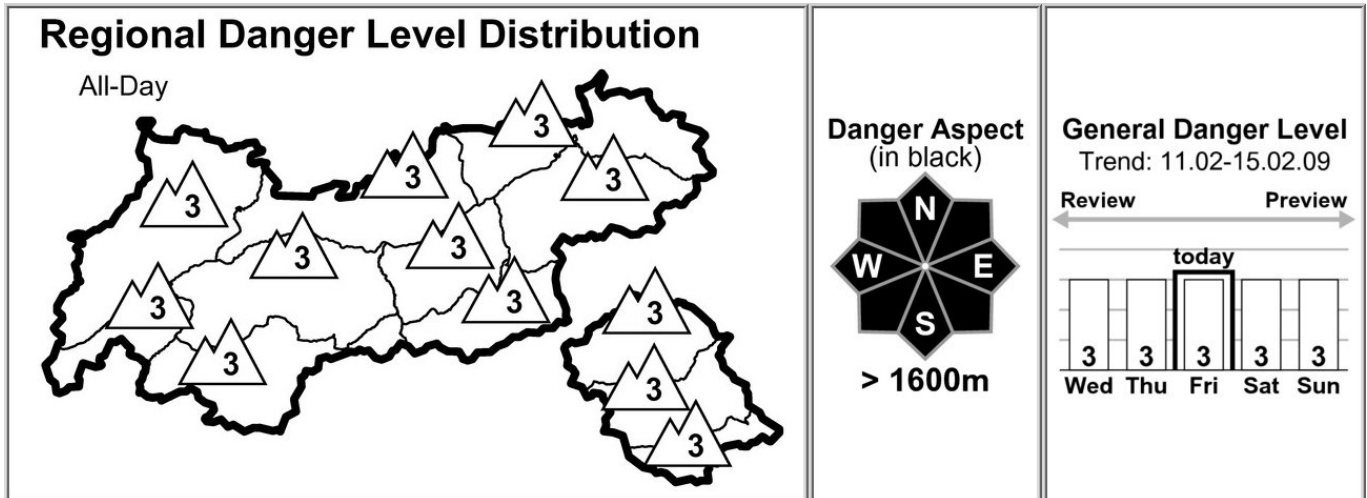


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Friday, 13.02.2009, at 07:30



AVALANCHE SITUATION ONGOINGLY TENSE FOR BACKCOUNTRY SKIERS AND FREERIDERS, CONSIDERABLE DANGER

AVALANCHE DANGER

In general, critical conditions prevail for backcountry skiers and freeriders, amid considerable danger of avalanches widespread. Slab avalanches can currently be triggered easily by minimum additional loading on steep slopes above 1600 m in particular; below that altitude, increasingly often wherever the winds have been strong. This is often the case in areas where the surface has not yet hardened utterly through the wind, in all aspects. On the one hand, the snowdrift masses which formed last week amid the strong southerly winds are trigger sensitive; on the other, so are the snowdrift accumulations of recent days which formed in the strong northwesterly airstream and are still forming. Depending on wind influence, even natural avalanches of small and medium size can trigger themselves on very steep slopes near the ridge lines. We urge backcountry skiers and freeriders towards high caution in crossing or descending steep slopes. The situation is more favourable only on highly frequented routes and slopes, where caution is nonetheless urged towards freshly formed snowdrift accumulations.

SNOW LAYERING

Once again there is new snow in North Tyrol, most of which fell in the northern regions, 10 to 15 cm. The winds are still blowing strongly in places, transporting the loosely packed, cold new snow. Snowpack analysis demonstrates that the bonding both of the new and the older snowdrift masses to the old snowpack is thoroughly poor. Potential bed surfaces for slab avalanches are a faceted layer which formed before 20 January, atop of which are usually loosely packed layers in which surface hoar is often embedded. The low temperatures increase the brittleness of the snowdrift, raising the likelihood of triggering. In general, the snowpack above the treeline has been heavily impacted by the winds.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

General weather conditions: cold air masses continue to move towards the Alps from the north, where the northernmost peaks provide a barrier. Towards the south, the air masses are drier and foehn wind conditions prevail in South and East Tyrol. This situation will remain more or less unchanged over the weekend. Mountain weather today: the Northern Alps are shrouded in clouds and a bit more new snow is expected, up to 10 cm. Along the Main Alpine Ridge, only insignificant snow showers are anticipated, with bright spells. On the southern flank of the Alps it will be quite sunny, but the brisk northerly winds will be unpleasant: it is bitter cold. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 14 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 22 degrees. Moderate to hefty, gusty northerly to northwesterly winds, which in some places will be strong.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

Unfavourable touring conditions continue. Great experience in assessing avalanche hazards is essential.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe