

Avalanche News

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Tuesday, 01.12.2009, at 09:45



Treacherous avalanche situation in East Tyrol's high alpine regions and along Main Alpine Ridge

AVALANCHE DANGER

Following heavy snowfall in some places over the last 24 hours, the avalanche danger in East Tyrol and the Zillertal and southern Ötztal and Stubai Alps has escalated to "considerable" at altitudes above 2000 m. Conditions above approximately 2500 m, particularly in East Tyrol and in the southern Ötztal and Stubai Alps, are currently the most critical. In the southern Ötztal and Stubai Alps, natural avalanches in areas adjacent to ridge lines on steep, west to north to east facing slopes have been reported. Successful artificial triggerings this morning have revealed increased proneness to triggering. Natural avalanches are no longer expected; nonetheless, we urge caution for all freeriders and tourers in regions with lots of freshly fallen snow when skiing over wind loaded slopes, particularly when a cohesive, area-wide snowpack already existed, i.e. on steep, shady slopes. In transition areas from little to lots of snow, large sized slab avalanches have already been triggered by minimum additional loading. As the precipitation wound down, there was but little wind; thus, the surface is blanketed with loosely packed snow in many places. This makes it more difficult to assess the danger.

SNOW LAYERING

Over the last 24 hours above approximately 2500 m in East Tyrol and in the southern Stubai Alps, there has been 50 to 75 cm of snowfall, in some places as much as 100 cm. Further north there was only 10 - 20 cm. Winds were strong when the precipitation but then slackened off significantly. The decisive factor for the potential danger of slab avalanches in any given area is whether or not there was an old snowpack before precipitation began. The snowfall from 11 October, especially above approximately 2000 m in west to north to east facing gullies and bowls, has remained; in those places, the old snow has become partially faceted, thus forming a potential bed surface for freshly formed snowdrift accumulations.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

General weather conditions: a low above Central Europe and cold, moist air from the north are the current determining factors of weather in the Alps. Mountain weather today: the summits on the northern flank of the Alps and on the Main Alpine Ridge are often veiled in clouds, accompanied by snow showers during the day. South of the Main Alpine Ridge, a bit of snowfall is anticipated this morning; in the afternoon, bright spells due to northerly winds. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 5 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 12 degrees. Light northwesterly winds prevail.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

The avalanche danger will gradually subside over the coming days.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe