

Avalanche News

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Friday, 04.12.2009, at 09:30



Considerable avalanche danger above 2000 m in the south in general, snowslides at low altitudes

AVALANCHE DANGER

From the Zillertal Alps in the east to the Silvretta in the west, considerable avalanche danger continues to prevail above approximately 2000 m. Moreover, the avalanche prone locations become more frequent with increasing altitude; they are to be found primarily on very steep, west-northwest to north to east-northeast facing areas adjacent to ridge lines. Slab avalanches can easily be triggered by minimum additional loading, especially in transitions from little to lots of snow. However, this is only the case where the recent snowfall (30.11-1.12) fell atop a cohesive, area-wide snowpack. A major hazard for ski tourers and freeriders stems from the recently formed snowdrift accumulations which are difficult to recognize, due to the small amounts of snowfall. Adjacent to ridge lines, even small sized, fresh snowdrift masses can be released. In East Tyrol, the danger is generally moderate. But in steep, shady areas adjacent to ridge lines and slopes there is increased likelihood of slab avalanches being triggered in areas exposed to wind. Elsewhere, full depth snowslides can be ongoingly expected even at low altitudes in the regions with lots of snowfall, i.e. East Tyrol, western part of Zillertal Alps, Stubai and Ötztal Alps and in Silvretta-Samnaun. These avalanches are more probable on steep, grassy slopes, and "announce" their approaching release through cracks in the snowpack.

SNOW LAYERING

The snowfall from 30.11 and 01.12 has now settled well. However, its bonding to the old snowpack from the heavy snowfall around 14.10 and again in early and mid-November, is still inadequate. Particularly on steep, shady slopes, this old snow has transformed to faceted, loosely packed crystals. The bonding to the snowdrift accumulations deposited atop it is poor in places. In addition, in all expositions up to summit altitudes, a thin icy layer from mid-November is still evident. Beneath that, another thin, faceted layer has formed which provides potential small-sized bed surfaces for slab avalanches.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

General weather conditions: a complex low pressure zone between Ireland and Iceland is sending clouds and moist air masses to Tyrol. Today, a cold front will traverse the land, full of rain and snow. On the weekend, no precipitation is expected, despite heavy clouds. As of Sunday, rising temperatures in the mountains. Mountain weather today: wintery in Tyrol's mountains. Along the Main Alpine Ridge and in East Tyrol, 15 to 25 cm of snowfall is anticipated, in the Northern Alps, 10 to 20 cm, and in the Kitzbühel Alps about 10 cm. Winds will shift to northerly and intensify the chill factor and already low temperatures. Tonight will remain dry. Temperatures at 2000 m: minus 6 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 11 degrees. Moderate southwesterly winds, during the morning they will be brisk. During the day, winds will shift to easterly, then northerly, and slacken off.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

The avalanche danger will recede only gradually at higher altitudes. After the present precipitation ends and temperatures rise, loosely packed avalanches from extremely steep slopes can be expected for a short interim. The next report will be published as soon as there is a significant change in the avalanche situation.

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Translated by Jeffrey McCabe