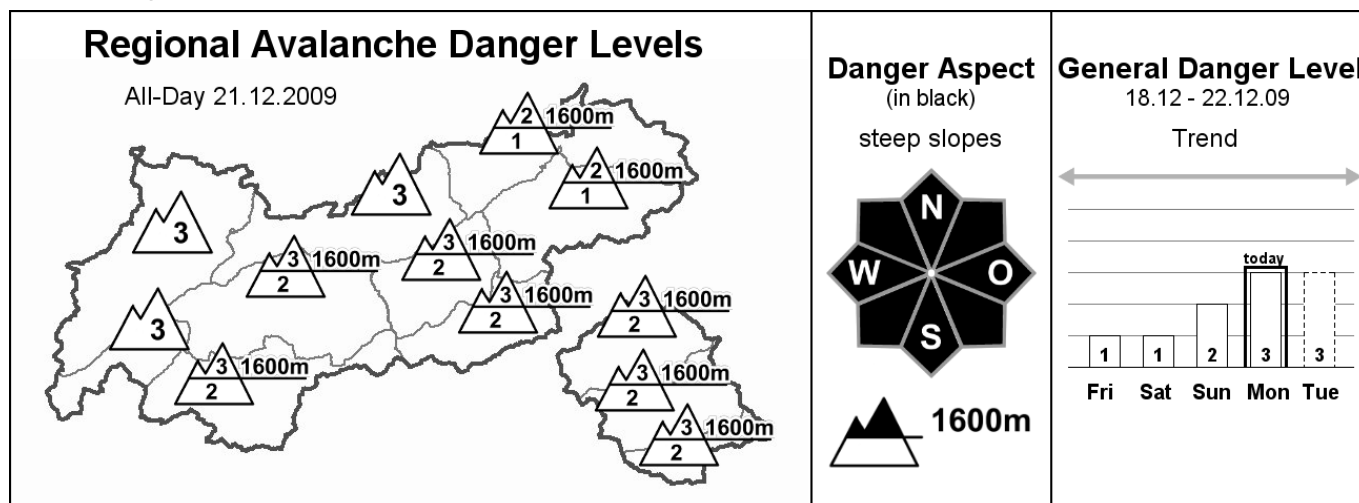


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Monday, 21.12.2009, at 07:30



Treacherous avalanche situation for backcountry tourers in areas subject to winds

AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche danger has escalated rapidly as the wind gained dominating influence in many areas. In all areas subject to winds there is considerable avalanche danger. The situation for backcountry ski tourers and freeriders is treacherous wherever the wind has caused fresh snow to be transported. This was confirmed as early as yesterday afternoon, when several (still) small sized avalanches were naturally triggered and several others were released which caught people in their wake, fortunately avoiding catastrophe. Currently most dangerous are the Arlberg regions, Ausserfern and the western part of the Northern Alps, where there was not only heavy snowdrifting at high altitude, but an additional 25 cm of new fallen snow since yesterday. Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations are larger and more frequent in those regions. Additional snow transport could easily lead to further natural avalanches today. In areas less subject to winds and where it did not snow, the danger is still low, e.g. areas below the treeline. In areas with little snow, moderate danger prevails because of the lack of snow, but not because of less likelihood of avalanches being triggered. All in all, the situation makes detailed knowledge of assessing avalanche dangers utterly imperative for backcountry ski tourers and freeriders in outlying terrain away from secured ski slopes.

SNOW LAYERING

Last night in northwestern North Tyrol there was 15 to 25 cm of snowfall, accompanied by strong winds at high altitudes which transported great snow masses. The bonding of the very loosely packed, cold, faceted old snowpack surface which has surface hoar in some places to the freshly formed snowdrift accumulations is extremely poor. The trigger sensitivity is, correspondingly, extremely high.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

Mountain weather today: in the northern Limestone Alps the snow showers will come to an end this morning. It will remain heavily overcast with poor visibility and diffuse light. In the Southern Alps, the peaks will become covered in fog over the course of the day and it will soon begin to snow. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 6 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 14 to minus 10 degrees. Moderate to strong southwesterly winds.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

A critical situation for backcountry ski tours will develop over the Christmas holidays, due to snowfall and winds.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe