

Avalanche News

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

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Caution urged towards fresh snowdrift accumulations in steep, high alpine terrain

AVALANCHE DANGER

Great heed is currently urged towards the potential avalanche peril in recently snowdrifted, very steep, high alpine terrain, i.e. above approximately 3000 m. This applies especially to the regions along the Main Alpine Ridge from the Silvretta in the west to the East Tyrol Tauern and central East Tyrol in the east of the country. Due to the high altitude southerly air currents predominating in recent days, avalanche prone locations can frequently be found in areas adjacent to ridge lines of northwestern to northern to eastern exposition, where slab avalanches can be triggered, in some places even through minimum additional loading. With some alpine experience in evaluating avalanche danger, these spots can be easily recognized and avoided. At lower altitudes, the avalanche hazards decrease correspondingly, largely because there are no weak layers inside the snowpack, a prerequisite for avalanches.

SNOW LAYERING

The foehn winds have battered the snowpack over the last few days. On the one hand, there has been major snow transport at higher altitudes; on the other, increasing moistness and/or melting of the snowpack at lower altitudes. A pronounced thin ice crust on the uppermost snow surface, which reaches nearly up to 3000 m altitude, resulting from the rainfall on 12 November, is a potential bed surface for small sized slab avalanches. Even more critical is the thin, faceted layer of snow near the ground in high alpine slopes of northwestern to northern to northeastern exposition which formed at the onset of winter.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

General weather conditions: a strong southwesterly air current is supplying foehn weather conditions to the northern flank of the Alps. On Monday, barrier effect clouds will cling to the southern flank of the Alps, on Tuesday a cold front will traverse the Alps, bringing precipitation with it. Mountain weather today: north of the Main Alpine Ridge, few clouds and lots of sunshine, also in most of East Tyrol's mountains. Temperature at 2000 m: plus 4 to 8 degrees; at 3000 m: plus two degrees. Moderate velocity southerly winds, although in foehn-exposed places the winds can reach storm strength. Forecast for the coming days: on Tuesday, heavy rainfall and snowfall, the snowfall level could drop to the Inn Valley; in southern regions, down to about 1000 m. Wintery conditions can be expected. On Wednesday it is likely to remain dry, but cloudy. On Thursday, it will be overcast amidst a small amount of precipitation and temperatures of about plus 5 degrees.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

The anticipated precipitation will lead to the formation of new snowdrift accumulations in high alpine regions, which should invariably be avoided in very steep terrain. On steep, smooth, grassy slopes, full depth wet snowslides are likely in regions with lots of fresh fallen snow.

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Translated by Jeffrey McCabe