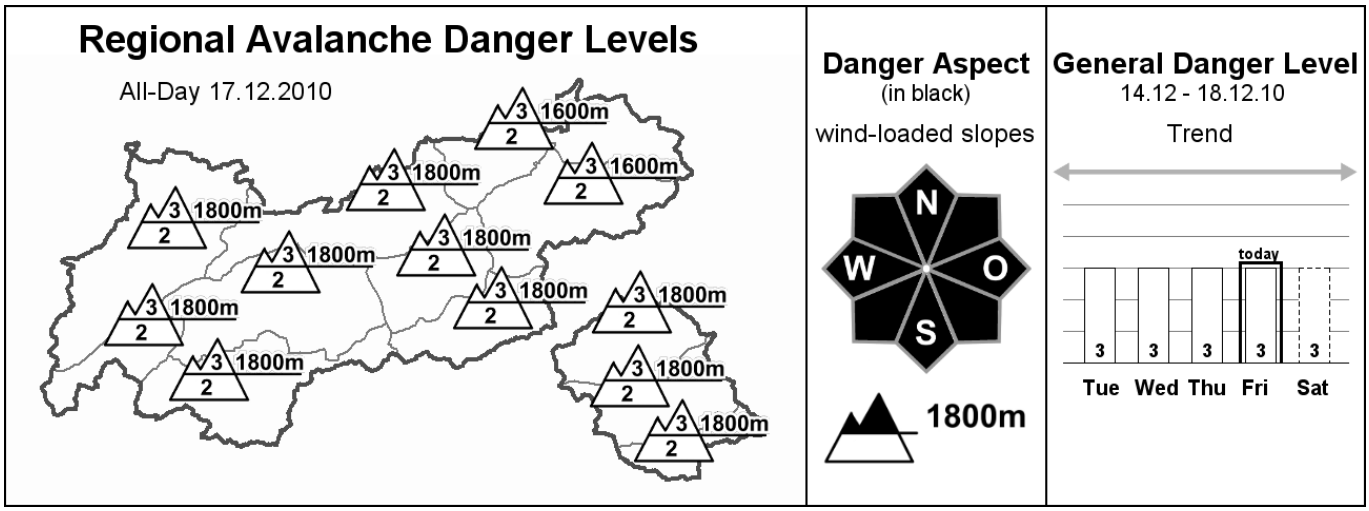
Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Friday, 17.12.2010, at 07:30



The major hazard for backcountry skiers and freeriders: fresh snowdrift accumulations

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AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche danger level above the treeline is still considerable, below that altitude moderate, at low altitudes it is low. Backcountry skiers and freeriders are urged great caution towards freshly formed snowdrift accumulations more than anything else, which are brittle (due to the low temperatures) and can be triggered even by minimum additional loading in very steep terrain. Avalanche prone locations are to be found in all expositions because of the constantly shifting wind direction; the danger zones tend to increase in frequency with ascending altitude. In the Arlberg and Ausserfern regions, the snowfall forecast for today will give rise to the most snowdrift. Special circumspection is required generally in steep areas adjacent to ridge lines. For older snowdrift to be unleashed, large additional loading is now necessary, and such avalanches usually remain small sized. In high alpine regions, on the other hand, on very steep, shady transition areas from shallow to deep snow, large sized avalanches can fracture all the way down to the ground. In isolated cases, full depth snowslides are still possible on steep, grassy slopes.

SNOW LAYERING

Persistent wind influence is responsible for the varying snow depths, at least above the treeline. The southwesterly wind which is now coming up and which will shift to northwesterly over the course of the day is leading to vast snow transport of the loosely packed, cold snow masses. Slab avalanches can fracture in the snowpack at the transition line between drifted and cold new fallen snow. In the central section of the snowpack, occasional thin, loose layers encircling ice crusts are potential bed surfaces for slab avalanches. Due to the highly varied and irregular snow distribution, the snowpack tends only slightly towards extensive failure layers. Thus, the avalanches which are triggered usually remain small sized.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

General weather: a disturbance stemming from a low over Scandinavia is moving towards Tyrol from the west, pushing brisk southwesterly foehn winds over North Tyrol in its van and lifting temperatures. Tomorrow, the arctic temperatures will return from the northwest. As of Sunday, air currents will shift to westerly, temperatures will rise. Mountain weather today: strong velocity winds in places, heavily overcast and snowfall moving in from the west, which will reach the Hohe Tauern and Dolomites by this afternoon. In the Arlberg region, 20 cm of snowfall is anticipated; on the Main Alpine Ridge 10 to 20 cm; elsewhere 5 to 10 cm of fresh fallen snow. Milder temperatures today, tomorrow it will be significantly colder, but dry. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 9 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 15 degrees.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

No significant change in the avalanche situation.

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