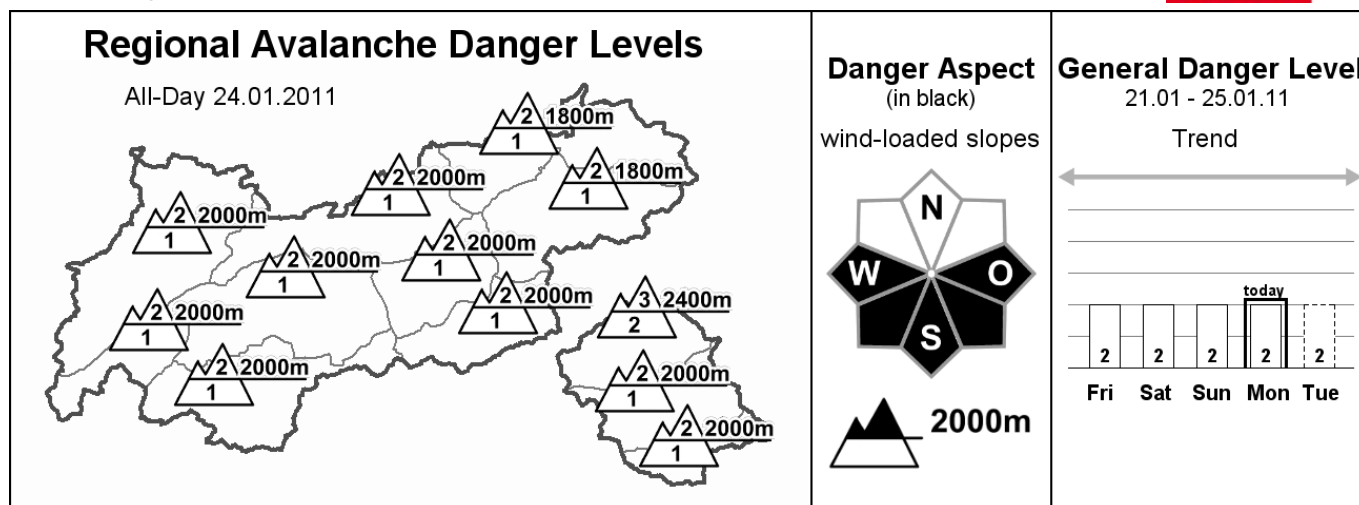


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Monday, 24.01.2011, at 07:30



Caution urged towards fresh snowdrift accumulations at high altitude

AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche danger is contingent on altitude. Conditions are currently most adverse in the East Tyrolean Tauern, where above 2400 m the danger level is considerable. In Tyrol's remaining regions, the danger level above approximately 2000 m is moderate, below that altitude it is low. Avalanche prone locations for backcountry skiers are in freshly formed, usually relatively small sized snowdrift accumulations, more than anywhere else. The frequency of danger zones tends to increase with ascending altitude and, above the treeline, also escalates over the course of the day. Special caution is urged in steep areas near ridge lines in eastern to southern to western exposition, as well as in very steep gullies and bowls. With some experience in assessing avalanche hazards, the fresh snowdrift masses can be easily recognized. In addition, in isolated cases slab avalanches can be triggered from more deeply embedded layers of the snowpack above approximately 2000 m, most often on north facing slopes, primarily through large additional loading.

SNOW LAYERING

The old snowpack is quite stable in general. Below about 2000 m, on sun-exposed slopes below about 2700 m, the snow which has fallen since 19 January has usually been deposited on top of a hard melt-freeze crust or a rain crust. At high altitudes, the old snowpack has been subject to heavy wind influence during the winter and is now quite compacted. The most important bed surface for slab avalanches is the borderline area between cold, loosely packed new fallen snow and the freshly formed snowdrift accumulations deposited atop it. In addition, slab avalanches can be triggered from a faceted layer which was formed during the extended period of low temperatures in December. This is often the case on north facing slopes above approximately 2000 m in wind protected zones of very steep bowls. In isolated cases, due to wind influence, the surface hoar has been covered over with snow at intermediate altitudes. In general, in those zones where wind has been absent, the powder snow is superb. Where wind has had an influence, caution is urged towards trigger sensitive snowdrift masses.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

Weather in general: on the eastern flank of a pronounced high over the Atlantic, the Alps will remain in a cold and intermittently moist northerly air current for the next few days. Mountain weather today: from the Allgau Alps over the Karwendel range to the Kitzbühel Alps, clouds will dominate, with occasional snowfall. South of the Main Alpine Ridge from the Ortler over the Dolomites to the Carnic Alps, it will be sunny. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 9 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 15 degrees. Moderate to strong northwesterly winds.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

Escalating avalanche danger at high altitude, due to wind influence

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe