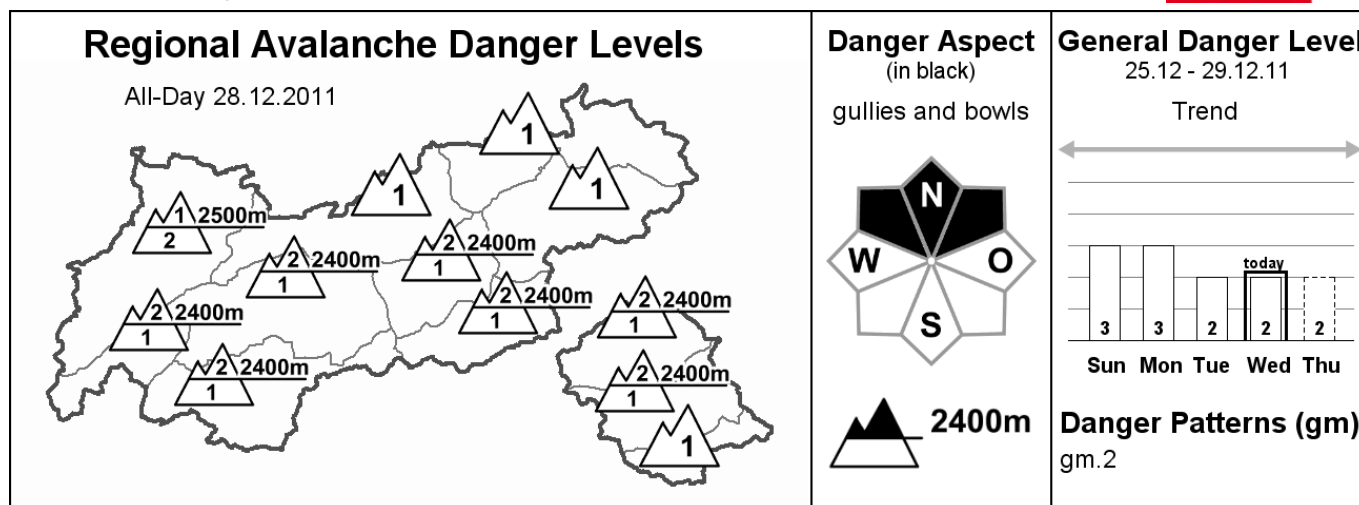


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Wednesday, 28.12.2011, at 07:30



Full depth snowslide danger on shady Main Alpine Ridge slopes above 2500 m

AVALANCHE DANGER

All in all, quite favourable backcountry touring conditions prevail. In eastern and southern East Tyrol, the danger level is generally low, elsewhere it corresponds to the altitude. Below 2400 m it is low; above that altitude it is moderate. The exception is Arlberg and Ausserfern, where the danger level is moderate below 2500 m, due to the greater likelihood of full depth snowslides; above that altitude it is low. The major peril for backcountry skiers and freeriders is still on steep, shady slopes, particularly along the Main Alpine Ridge above approximately 2500 m, where avalanches can be triggered primarily through large additional loading, a danger unfortunately confirmed by yesterday's avalanche accident in extremely steep, shady terrain in the southern Ötztal and Stubai Alps. Elsewhere, caution is urged on steep grassy slopes, where snowslides are possible, particularly in western regions which had heaviest snowfall. Full depth snowslides usually announce imminent danger through glide cracks in the snowpack surface, making it advisable to avoid zones below such cracks.

SNOW LAYERING

During a observational flight in a military helicopter yesterday, we carried out numerous snow analyses. The results showed stable snow layering for the most part, except on very steep, shady slopes above about 2500 m, where the layer near the ground consists of depth hoar which could easily serve as a bed surface for slab avalanches. With rising altitude, such a fundament is more evident also on west and east facing slopes. Due to mild temperatures, the snowpack elsewhere has continued to settle and consolidate. Snow distribution is highly irregular and varied, the snow quality better in northern than in southern regions. There is firm snow on the southern flank of the Alps on very steep slopes at intermediate altitudes; powder snow in some places on shady slopes.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

Weather in general: high pressure widespread; in the remaining days of this year, some perturbances and heavy snowfall in the mountains are the prospects. Mountain weather today: marvellous conditions for winter sports, mild and sunny, amidst a few feathery clouds this afternoon which will not impede visibility. Temperature at 2000 m: plus 5 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 1 degree. Light southwesterly winds, increasing to moderate velocity this afternoon

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

The forecast snowfall will heighten the avalanche danger somewhat, requiring renewed caution towards snowdrift accumulations.

Patrick Nairz

Translated by Jeffrey McCabe