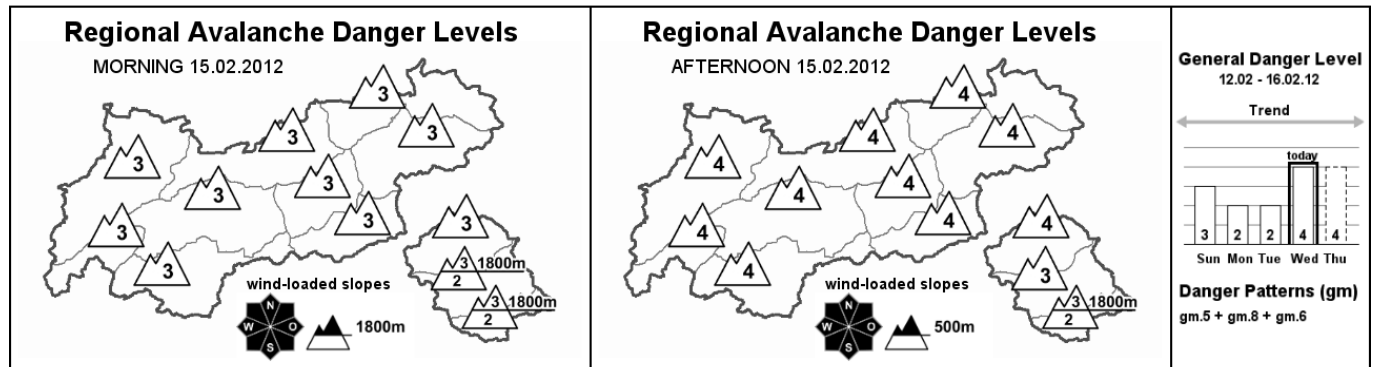


Avalanche Bulletin

of the Avalanche Warning Service Tyrol

Wednesday, 15.02.2012, at 07:30



As of midday, generally high avalanche danger, except in southern East Tirol

AVALANCHE DANGER

The avalanche situation is in the process of drastic transformation, due to the forecast snowfall and winds which have already reached storm strength. During the morning, the danger level will still be "considerable", but it will rise to "high" in North Tirol and in the East Tirolean Tauern as of midday. That means many more naturally triggered avalanches are anticipated. Steep, ridgeline areas in northeastern to southern to southwestern aspects will frequently be struck, as will the seldom used wind protected areas which until now have been spared naturally triggered avalanches, including below the treeline, in all aspects. There is extremely poor bonding between the old snowpack surface and the snowdrift masses now accumulating. The size of the coming avalanches depends on the depth of the drifted masses, since the solid-base snowpack is unlikely to fracture down to more deeply embedded layers. Thus, highly unfavourable conditions prevail for backcountry skiers and freeriders. Those without sufficient experience are urgently advised to remain on secured ski runs. The situation in southern East Tirol is better, although even there the freshly formed snowdrift accumulations in steep terrain should be consequently avoided. On slopes often trodden and skied on, as well as in high alpine regions constantly exposed to wind, the situation is slightly more favourable. An additional, continuing source of danger are full depth snowslides which can be released on steep, grassy slopes.

SNOW LAYERING

As to the consequences of today's snowfall, which has already begun in some regions, the structure of the present snowpack surface is decisive. It consists of loosely packed, faceted snow crystals in many places, due to the long period of cold, and is often covered with surface hoar. On steep, sunny slopes, furthermore, there is a thin melt-freeze crust which is surrounded by loose, faceted snow. Snow profiles have confirmed the thoroughly poor bonding of this surface with the drifted snow masses deposited on top of it. Such snowdrift is expected to become much deeper over the course of the day, making it even more prone to triggering.

ALPINE WEATHER FORECAST (ZAMG-WEATHER SERVICE INNSBRUCK)

Weather in general: the center of a storm low over Poland is moving to eastern Austria, bringing Tirol strong northwesterly winds and snowfall; southern regions will be spared the worst of this. On Thursday, intense barrier cloud effect on the northern flank of the Alps; northerly winds on the southern flank of the Alps, and somewhat drier conditions, are expected. Mountain weather today: persistent, intermittently intense snowfall, accompanied by storm strength winds and snow transport. Snowfall will be heaviest in the Arlberg - Lechtal Alps region, but also along the Main Alpine Ridge. Poor visibility far and wide. Temperature at 2000 m: minus 9 degrees; at 3000 m: minus 16 degrees. Strong to storm strength westerly to northwesterly winds.

SHORT TERM DEVELOPMENT

Naturally triggered avalanches are expected to diminish, but thoroughly treacherous conditions continue to prevail for backcountry tours

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