



National avalanche bulletin no. 121

for Sunday, 14 March 2010

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Moderate avalanche danger - snowdrift accumulating afresh in some regions

Current conditions

On Saturday it was predominantly sunny in the Swiss Alps. Only in the eastern regions was it intermittently overcast. The midday temperatures at 2000 m were between minus 8 degrees in eastern regions and minus 2 degrees in southern regions. The northerly wind turned quite brisk in some regions. Particularly on the Main Alpine Ridge and in Grisons it blew at moderate velocity, elsewhere it was light. The snowpack has a highly varied structure even across small surface areas. Both older and freshly formed snowdrift accumulations are evident widespread in the upper most layers of the snowpack. The intermediate and more deeply embedded layers of the snowpack consist of faceted and loosely packed snow crystals widespread. This is especially the case in the inneralpine regions and in some sectors of the central and western parts of the northern flank of the Alps. Fractures in the old snowpack now occur less frequently, yet are still possible nonetheless. The snow layering in the eastern part of the northern flank of the Alps, on the southern flank of the Alps and on heavily frequented slopes is somewhat more favourable. On steep, south facing slopes, the uppermost layers of the snowpack are softening over the course of the day.

Short-term development

On Sunday in all regions of the Swiss Alps, it is expected to be sunny to begin with. Over the course of the day, clouds will move in from the north. Only on the southern flank of the Alps and in the Engadine will conditions remain sunny and pleasant until evening. The midday temperatures at 2000 m will be minus 7 degrees in northern regions and minus 3 degrees in southern regions. A light to moderate wind will be blowing and will shift from northerly to northwesterly.

Avalanche danger forecast for Sunday

Simplon region and Binntal:

Considerable avalanche danger (Level 3)

The avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in all expositions above approximately 2000 m. Snowdrift accumulations can be released as avalanches even by a single backcountry skier or freerider. Backcountry tours require extensive experience in spotting and evaluating avalanche hazards and necessitate a prudent route selection.

Northern flank of the Alps; remaining Valais; Ticino; Grisons:

Moderate avalanche danger (Level 2)

In the northern Prealps, the avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in southwestern to northern to southeastern exposition above approximately 1600 m. Older snowdrift accumulations can be triggered by large additional loading in particular.

In the central part of the southern flank of the Alps, in the Bergell and Puschlav, the avalanche prone locations are to be found primarily on wind loaded slopes in all expositions above approximately 2000 m. Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations are expected to increase in size and frequency over the course of the day. They are to be found primarily in pass areas behind breaks in the terrain as well as in gullies and bowls. They can be easily triggered in some places, but remain small sized. By exercising a cautious route selection, they should be avoided whenever possible.

On the northern flank of the Alps not including the Prealps, in the Valais not including the Simplon region and not including the Binntal, additionally in northern and central Grisons, in the Engadine and in Münstertal, the avalanche prone locations are to be found on steep slopes in all expositions above approximately 1800 m. Avalanches can be triggered particularly in the uppermost layers of the snowpack through large additional loading. Apart from that, avalanches can fracture down in the old snowpack in isolated cases, particularly in transition areas from shallow to deep snow and in general at altitudes between 2000 and 3000 meters. The snow situation, which is highly varied even over small surface areas, makes a cautious route selection, as well as measures to protect and preserve the snowpack, imperative. Freshly formed snowdrift accumulations should be assessed with great care.

Trend for Monday and Tuesday

On Monday it is expected to be heavily overcast in northern regions. Snowfall is anticipated in the eastern regions in particular, accompanied by strong northwesterly winds, which will last until the morning hours on Tuesday. Subsequently the skies will brighten up. In southern regions it will be predominantly sunny on both days. The avalanche danger is expected to escalate on Monday in some regions.

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