Avalanche bulletin through Wednesday, 22 May 2019

21.5.2019, 17:32

Danger of dry-snow and wet-snow avalanches. Particularly at higher altitudes in the eastern regions, the avalanche situation is treacherous.

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Avalanche danger

Central and eastern sectors of the northern flank of the Alps, Grisons not including the southern valleys:

The fresh snow and freshly generated snowdrifts at high altitude are prone to triggering. The avalanche prone locations for dry-snow avalanches are found on steep slopes in all aspects above approximately 2400 m. Avalanches can be easily triggered and, particularly on the northern flank of the Alps and in northern Grisons, they can grow to large size. Backcountry tours require a prudent route selection and experience in evaluating the avalanche dangers on-site.
As a consequence of the rainfall, further large-sized wet-snow avalanches can be expected during the night below approximately 2400 m in the northern regions more than anywhere else. In addition, as a result of solar radiation and daytime warming, further wet-snow avalanches can be expected. This applies to sunny slopes below approximately 3000 m and north-facing slopes below approximately 2400 m.

Western sector of the northern flank of the Alps, Valais not including Simplon region and southern Goms:

The fresh snow and freshly generated snowdrifts of the last few days are still prone to triggering at high altitudes. The avalanche prone locations are found in western-to-northern-to-eastern aspects above approximatel 2800 m more than anywhere else. Avalanches can reach medium size. Tours in outlying terrain away from secured and marked ski runs regions prudent route selection and experience in assessing avalanche dangers on-site.
After a partly clear night, solar radiation and daytime warming are expected to give rise to moist snow slides and avalanches on south facing slopes up to the high Alpine regions and on north facing slopes below approximately 2800 m. Wet snow avalanches can reach a large size in isolated cases.

southern flank of the Alps, Simplon region, southern Goms:

Avalanche prone locations for dry-snow avalanches are found particularly on north-facing slopes above 2800 m. Avalanches are predominantly small-sized. Apart from the dangers of being buried in snow, the risks of being swept alng and forced to take a fall also need to be given due consideration.
As a consequence of daytime warming and solar radiation, medium-sized wet-snow avalanches are possible. This applies to south-facing slopes up as far as the high alpine regions, and north-facing slopes below approximately 2800 m.

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Snow and weather

Schneedecke

At high altitudes there is still significantly more snow than is customary for this juncture of the season. The fresh snow at high altitudes is prone to triggering. Particularly in the eastern regions, the fresh snow has been transported by strong-velocity northwesterly winds and large-sized snowdrift accumulations were generated.
The fresh snow and snowdrifts were deposited on top of an old snowpack which is thoroughly wet on north-facing slopes below approximately 2500 m and on south-facing slopes up as far as the high alpine regions.
Under the influence of rain, further wet snow avalanches are to be expected during the night in the east. Solar radiation is expected to release wet snow avalanches in the fresh snow during the day.

Weather review to Tuesday, 21 May

During the night the precipitation came to an end in the western regions. During the daytime it was partly sunny in western and southern regions, in eastern regions there was additional snowfall abobve 2000 m. Winds in the western and southern regions were blowing at light to moderate strength, in the other regions of Switzerland at moderate to strong velocity, from the northwest.
Between Sunday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon the following amounts of fresh snow were registered above 2500 m:

- Lower Valais, upper Mattertal, northern rgions of the northern flank of the Alps, northern Grisons not including Surselva: 30 to 50 cm, more from place to place;
- in the other regions of Switzerland: 15 to 30 cm over widespread areas; south of the Main Alpine Ridge and in the Simplon region, less.

In the Prealps there was very intensive rainfall.

Weather outlook through Wednesday, 22 May

In the western regions, nighttime skies will be clear, in the other regions overcast. In the eastern regions snowfall is anticipated above approximately 2000 m. During the daytme it will be predominantly sunny in the western and southern regions, increasingly so in the eastern regions. Midday temperatures will lie between +4 °C in the northern regions and +8 °C in the southern regions. Winds will be light.
Between Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday afternoon, the following amounts of fresh snow are anticipated abobve 2500 m:

- central and eastern sectors of the northern flank of the Alps not including the Gotthard region, northern Prättigau: 15 to 30 cm;
- eastern part of the Bernese Alps, remaining parts of northern Grisons, Silvretta, Samnaun: 5 to 15 cm;
- in the other regions of Switzerland, less; or else it will remain dry.

Outlook

On Thursday it will be predominantly sunny, following a night of clear skies. In the afternoon, convective cloud build-up is expected over the mountains and showers will be possible from place to place. The zero-degree level will ascend to approximately 3000 m. On Friday skies will be increasingly overcast. During the afternoon showers are possible in the western and the southern regions more than anywhere else.
The danger of dry-snow avalanches will decrease. The danger of wet-snow avalanches will increase during the course of each day as a result of daytime warming and solar radiation.

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