

## West Slopes Central - Skagit River to South of I-90

Issued: 8:06 AM PST Sunday, February 4, 2018 by Dennis D'Amico

NWAC avalanche forecasts apply to backcountry avalanche terrain in the Olympics, Washington Cascades and Mt Hood area. These forecasts do not apply to developed ski areas, avalanche terrain affecting highways and higher terrain on the volcanic peaks above the Cascade crest level.

**8 AM Update: Changed Wet Slab Avalanches to Wind Slab Avalanches Above Treeline in Mt. Baker Zone (West Slopes North)**

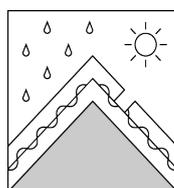
**The Bottom Line:** Dangerous avalanche conditions exist near and above treeline. Use extra caution in terrain steeper than 35 degrees and where you may be exposed to steep slopes from above. Very large and destructive wet avalanches and cornice falls are possible where heavy rain is falling on a previously dry snowpack.

Elevation	Sunday, February 4, 2018		Outlook for Monday
 <b>Above Treeline</b>	 <b>Considerable</b>	Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making essential.	 <b>Considerable</b>
 <b>Near Treeline</b>	 <b>Considerable</b>	Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making essential.	 <b>Moderate</b>
 <b>Below Treeline</b>	 <b>Moderate</b>	Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify problem features.	 <b>Moderate</b>

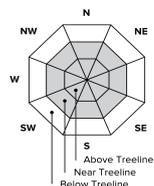
### Avalanche Problems for Sunday

#### Wet Slab

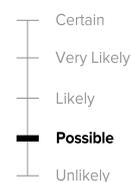
Wet slabs occur when there is liquid water in the snowpack, and can release during the first few days of a warming period. Travel early in the day and avoiding avalanche paths when you see pinwheels, roller balls, loose wet avalanches, and during rain-on-snow events.



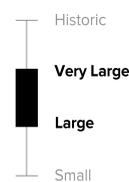
**Avalanche Problem**



**Aspect/Elevation**



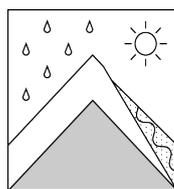
**Likelihood**



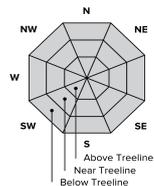
**Size**

#### Loose Wet

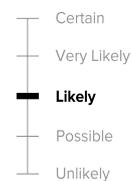
Loose wet avalanches occur where water is running through the snowpack, and release at or below the trigger point. Avoid terrain traps such as cliffs, gullies, or tree wells. Exit avalanche terrain when you see pinwheels, roller balls, a slushy surface, or during rain-on-snow events.



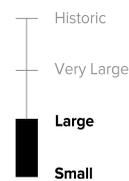
**Avalanche Problem**



**Aspect/Elevation**



**Likelihood**



**Size**

## Avalanche Forecast for Sunday

Expect dangerous and complex avalanche conditions today due to heavy rain and warming temperatures. Wet avalanches can be very large and can pose serious consequences. Avalanches big enough to bury a car are not out of the question today. The most dangerous slopes are near and above treeline. Previously dry snow above treeline will become saturated with water for the first time. Avoid slopes with a wet snowpack that are 35 degrees and steeper.

Wet Slab avalanches hold today's gravest consequences. These avalanches are difficult to anticipate and manage. Use extra caution when crossing the tracks and runouts of avalanche paths and where you are exposed to overhead avalanche terrain. Wet Slabs could start at upper elevations and run long distances into lower elevations.

You are most likely to trigger or see Wet Loose avalanches. Many of these slides ran in the past couple days. The Wet Loose avalanche cycle is tapering off below treeline, but will continue at upper elevations. While these avalanches may be the smallest and most predictable of today's problems, they could still be forceful or large enough to injure or bury you. Avoid traveling through or above terrain such as or cliffs, gullies, or rocky slopes where the consequences of being caught in an avalanche could be increased.

Cornice fall and Glide avalanches have become possible due to rain and rising temperatures. Both could be very large and dangerous. Avoid areas with visible glide cracks or where known rock slabs underlie the seasons snowpack. Give yourself an extra wide margin of safety near ridges that could hold cornices, and avoid slopes with cornices overhead.

## Avalanche Summary

Warm wet weather Friday and Saturday created moist to wet surface snow conditions up to 6500 feet. A natural Loose Wet avalanche cycle occurred Friday with peak warming and precipitation.

Above treeline, below freezing temperatures, additional snow, and moderate winds drifted snow on a variety of aspects. Poor visibility and stormy conditions have limited observations at higher elevations.

Cornices throughout the area have grown very large. Glide cracks have opened up on typical rock slabs especially in the Snoqualmie Pass and Mount Baker area.

### Observations

#### Stevens Pass

NWAC Avalanche Forecasters and observers noted numerous natural wet loose avalanches on all aspects Friday and Saturday. These avalanches ranged from small to large, with some travelling 1000 vertical feet. As of Saturday rain created over 1 foot of wet surface snow, extending below the January 29th crust.

#### Snoqualmie Pass

On Saturday, Alpentel Ski Patrol reported audible cornices collapses along ridges in the Alpentel Valley. Both patrol and an NWAC observer reported Glide avalanches, visible glide cracks, and significant amounts of water running through the snowpack. Also reported were many wet loose avalanches at all aspects near and below treeline

#### South

An avalanche professional in the Crystal backcountry Thursday noted lingering dry drifted snow near ridges. By late in the day light rain was already effecting the below treeline bands.

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## Mountain Weather Synopsis for Sunday & Monday

Moisture continues to stream into the region in NW flow aloft, riding up and over a stationary upper level ridge parked offshore. Moderate to occasionally heavy rain seen along the west slopes of the Cascades today has come to an end as a weak frontal boundary passed through the area earlier this afternoon, changing steady rain to showers with intensities lowering and beginning to usher in somewhat cooler air. The north Cascades on both sides of the crest were again the relatively local cool spot in this rainy pattern, with snow levels peaking around 6000 feet today. Moderate to strong westerly winds will continue in most locations and elevations in this pattern. Snow levels will gradually fall overnight and settle between 3500-4500 feet on Monday. Showers should continue in W-NW flow, again mainly for the west slopes of the Cascades, with new snowfall accumulations expected above 4000 feet for Snoqualmie Pass to Mt. Baker. A weak upper level feature may enhance shower activity in the north Cascades on Monday. NW flow will keep plenty of moisture and clouds banked up along the west slopes of the Cascades Monday and Monday night. The ridge will amplify offshore on Monday and begin to slide back towards the PNW Monday night, helping to decrease shower activity.

**24 Hour Quantitative Precipitation ending at 4 am**

Location	Mon	Tue
Hurricane Ridge	.25	lt .10
Mt Baker Ski Area	2.00	.50
Washington Pass	.75	lt .25
Stevens Pass	2.00	.50 - .75
Snoqualmie Pass	2.00	.50 - .75
Mission Ridge	lt .10	lt .10
Crystal Mt	.25	lt .10
Paradise	1.50 - 2.00	lt .25
White Pass	.50 - .75	lt .10
Mt Hood Meadows	.50 - .75	lt .10
Timberline	.50 - .75	lt .10

LT = less than; WE or Water equivalent is the liquid water equivalent of melted snow in hundredths of inches. As a rough approximation 1 inch of snow = about .10 inches WE, or 10 inches of snow = about 1 inch WE.

**Snow Level/Freezing Level in feet**

Day	Northwest Northeast Central South					Easterly Flow in Passes
	Olympics	Cascades	Cascades	Cascades	Cascades	
Sunday Afternoon	7000'	6000'	6000'	6500'	7500'	
Sunday Evening	6000'	5000'	5500'	5500'	7000'	
Sunday Night	4500'	4000'	4500'	4500'	5500'	
Monday	4000'	4000'	4000'	3500'	4500'	
Monday Night	3500'	3000'	3000'	3000'	4000'	

Cascade Snow / Freezing Levels noted above refer to the north (approximately Mt Baker and Washington Pass), central (approximately Stevens to White Pass) and south (near Mt Hood). Freezing Level is when no precipitation is forecast.

\* Note that surface snow levels are common near the passes during easterly pass flow and may result in multiple snow / freezing levels.

**USE AT YOUR OWN RISK**

This Backcountry Avalanche Forecast is provided in conjunction with the US Forest Service, and is intended for personal and recreational purposes only. Safe backcountry travel requires preparation and planning, and this information may be used for planning purposes but does not provide all the information necessary for backcountry travel. Advanced avalanche education is strongly encouraged.

The user acknowledges that it is impossible to accurately predict natural events such as avalanches in every instance, and the accuracy or reliability of the data provided here is not guaranteed in any way. This forecast describes general avalanche conditions and local variations will always occur. This forecast expires 24 hours after the posted time unless noted otherwise.