



Northwest
Avalanche
Center



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Stevens Pass

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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.

The Bottom Line: No significant avalanche problems are expected Tuesday, however non-avalanche-related hazards exist. Avoid steep icy slopes and exposed glide crack openings that pose a danger to backcountry travelers. Small loose wet avalanches are possible on very steep solar slopes receiving direct sunshine along with warming temperatures in the south and central Cascades.

Elevation	Tuesday, February 13, 2018		Outlook for Wednesday
Above Treeline	Low	Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Moderate
Near Treeline	Low	Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Moderate
Below Treeline	Low	Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Low

Avalanche Forecast for Tuesday

Avalanches will be unlikely but not impossible Tuesday.

Small loose wet avalanches are possible on very steep solar slopes receiving direct sunshine along with warming temperatures in the south and central Cascades. Even a small loose wet avalanche could be dangerous near terrain traps. Increasing clouds and winds will quickly dampen any warming in the northwest Cascades and eventually mitigate the warming in the central-west Cascades.

Large cornices may still exist in some locations. Cornice fall is very difficult to predict but can become more likely with daytime warming and direct sunshine. Minimize your exposure if traveling below these features by selecting routes and re-grouping locations away from overhead hazard.

Non-avalanche-related hazards exist. Glide cracks, creeks, and openings within the snowpack have formed during recent warm wet weather. Falling into these holes poses a danger to backcountry travelers. Avoid traveling on steep icy slopes where it will be difficult to stop a fall.

Avalanche Summary

In general, a strong stable snowpack exists around the region at all elevations. Up to 6 inches of soft snow sits on a supportable crust in most locations. On slopes that have recently received direct sun, spring-like conditions can be found in the afternoons.

Warm wet weather from the beginning of February created a well consolidated snowpack. While we are tracking some deeper buried crust layers, there are no significant layers of concern.

Above treeline, winds from Thursday night and Friday transported snow forming isolated wind slabs. These slabs are now five days old and unlikely to trigger.

There have not been any reports of avalanches in several days.

Observations

North

An avalanche professional in the Mt Baker backcountry Saturday reported winds transporting snow above treeline. Surface crusts were strong and supportable.

Central

NWAC field staff field Friday, Saturday and again on Sunday all reported a strong snowpack with no significant layers of concern. All observations show recent soft snow over a supportable and strengthening crust layer. Numerous glide cracks and openings in the snowpack were present and created a non-avalanche travel hazard.

South

No recent observations

Mountain Weather Synopsis for Tuesday & Wednesday

The strong upper level ridge anchored offshore near 145W has become flattened as a frontal wave currently E-W oriented over central British Columbia continues to sag south. High and mid clouds will filter into the forecast area from north to south today. Skies will become cloudy over the north Cascades by late morning and be accompanied by increasing crest level winds out of the west. The south Cascades including Mt. Hood should see mostly sunny skies for the better part of today. Out ahead of this frontal system, freezing levels are quite mild. Similar to the cloud forecast, there will be a north/south freezing level gradient over the region, with much warmer freezing levels realized in the south Cascades during the daylight hours. The front will quickly pass through tonight with precipitation developing late this evening over the Olympics and Washington Cascades. Snow levels will fall rapidly as a sharp cool upper trough moves over the region by early Wednesday morning. Post-frontal snow showers are expected to linger longest in the central and southwest Cascades Wednesday afternoon, with skies becoming broken over the Olympics and north Cascades as the flow aloft turns more northerly. A quick 6-12 inches of snow is possible for the west slopes of the Cascades and Mt. Hood from this system with lower snowfall totals expected for the Olympics and the east slopes of the Cascades. The upper level ridge will amplify offshore Wednesday night and shower activity will quickly taper down as the trough shifts into the Intermountain West.

Precipitation Forecast			Snow/Freezing Level (ft)						
Location	Wed	Thu					Mt. Rainier and	Easterly Flow in the	
			Hurricane Ridge	Mt. Washington Baker	Stevens Pass	Snoqualmie Pass	Crystal Mt.	Mt. Hood	
Hurricane Ridge	lt .25	lt .25							
Mt Baker Ski Area	.25 - .50	.25							
Washington Pass	.25	lt .25							
Stevens Pass	.25 - .50	.50							
Snoqualmie Pass	.25 - .50	.50							
Mission Ridge	lt .10	lt .10							
Crystal Mt	lt .10	.25							
Paradise	.25 - .50	.50							
White Pass	lt .25	.25							
Mt Hood Meadows	lt .10	.75 - 1.00							
Timberline	lt .10	1.00							
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.			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.						
			* Easterly flow in the Cascade Passes can cause locally lower Snow or Freezing levels than areas further west.						