Mt Hood

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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.

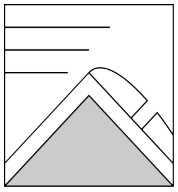
The Bottom Line: Avalanche conditions will begin to change Wednesday as moderate westerly winds transport new snowfall and quickly build fresh wind slabs on lee slopes near and above treeline. Avoid steep slopes with wind deposited snow such as below cornices, on wind drifts, and near uneven snow surfaces. Shallow storm slabs may develop in less wind affected areas throughout the terrain Wednesday.

Elevation	Wednesday		Outlook for Thursday
Above Treeline	Moderate	Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify problem features.	Moderate
Near Treeline	Moderate	Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify problem features.	Moderate
Below Treeline	Moderate	Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify problem features.	Moderate

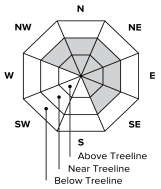
Avalanche Problems for Wednesday

Wind Slab

Wind slabs can take up to a week to stabilize. They are confined to lee and cross-loaded terrain features and can be avoided by sticking to sheltered or wind scoured areas.

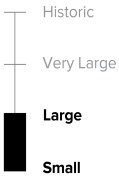


Avalanche Problem



Aspect/Elevation

Likelihood

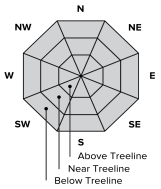


Size

Storm Slabs

Storm slabs usually stabilize within a few days, and release at or below the trigger point. They exist throughout the terrain, and can be avoided by waiting for the storm snow to stabilize.

Avalanche Problem



Aspect/Elevation

Likelihood

Size

Avalanche Forecast for Wednesday

A quick moving frontal system should bring fresh snowfall to Mt. Hood late Tuesday night and Wednesday morning along with much cooler temperatures. 6-12 inches of new snow may bond poorly to a medley of wind sculpted snow surfaces or surface crusts.

Avalanche conditions will begin to change Wednesday as moderate westerly winds transport new snowfall and quickly build fresh wind slabs on lee slopes near and above treeline. Avoid steep slopes with wind deposited snow such as below cornices, on wind drifts, and near uneven snow surfaces. Shallow storm slabs may develop in less wind affected areas throughout the terrain Wednesday. Watch for developing storm slab instabilities during extended periods of intense snowfall.

Loose dry avalanches will not be listed as a problem but will be possible on very steep slopes. Be aware of the consequences of a loose dry avalanche near terrain traps such as cliffs, gullies, or open creeks. In areas where shallow loose new snow bonds poorly to the underlying crust, avoid steep icy slopes where it will be difficult to stop a fall.

Avalanche Summary

Temperatures pushed into the upper 30s and 40s under mostly sunny skies Tuesday. Westerly winds near and above treeline picked up late in the day. Softened snow surfaces will quickly refreeze due to winds and cooling temperatures Tuesday night.

Warm and wet weather the first week of February created a strong and consolidated snowpack. The current snowpack consist of numerous old crusts and very strong refrozen layers. There are no significant layers of concern at this time.

No avalanches have been observed over the last several days.

Observations

Mt Hood Meadows ski patrol Sunday reported very firm surface snow conditions resulting in no current avalanche problems.

Mountain Weather Synopsis for Wednesday & Thursday

On Wednesday, a shortwave trough embedded in Northwest flow aloft is sliding over the Pacific Northwest and has replaced a tongue of Tuesday's offshore high pressure ridge which had kept us under warm and generally fair weather. The trough axis has moved just east of the Cascades by Wednesday afternoon.The relatively stationary Pacific High pressure dominates all but the peripheries of the North Pacific Ocean and the next frontal wave to affect the region is currently riding over the top of the ridge and is located just south of Alaska. A surface cold front which passed to our east on Tuesday night brought a significant decrease in temperatures (now most stations are in the 20's and 10's) with decreasing post-frontal westerly flow and generally decreasing light to moderate snow showers. A band of heavier convergence is currently moving south of Stevens pass toward Snoqualmie pass. Snow showers will be heaviest along the west slopes of the Cascades from the central Cascades to Mt. Hood. Any snow shower activity should be light by the afternoon and most areas will see snow showers ending by evening. Upper-level northwest flow will continue with a break between the systems generally Wednesday night through Thursday, with some very light snow shower activity continuing in the Mt. Hood area during this period. Thursday night, another upper shortwave approaches from the northwest, spreading increasing light to occasional moderate snow into the region along with increasing moderate westerly winds at crest-level. The brunt of this system won't arrive until daylight hours on Friday.

24 Hour Quantitative Precipitation ending at 4 am

Location	Thu	Fri
Hurricane Ridge	lt .25	lt .25
Mt Baker Ski Area	lt .25	lt .25
Washington Pass	lt .25	lt .10
Stevens Pass	.25	.25
Snoqualmie Pass	.25	.25 - .50
Mission Ridge	lt .10	lt .10
Crystal Mt	.25 - .50	lt .10
Paradise	.75 - 1.00	.25
White Pass	.25 - .50	.25
Mt Hood Meadows	1.00 - 1.25	lt .10
Timberline	1.00 - 1.50	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	Olympics	Northwest Cascades	Northeast Cascades	Central Cascades	South Cascades	Easterly Flow in Passes
Wednesday Afternoon	2500'	2000'	2000'	2000'	2500'	
Wednesday Night	1500'	1000'	500'	1000'	2000'	
Thursday Morning	1500'	1000'	1000'	2000'	2000'	
Thursday Afternoon	2000'	1500'	1500'	2000'	2500'	
Thursday Night	1500'	1500'	1500'	2000'	2000'	

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.