



Northwest
Avalanche
Center



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Mt Hood

Issued: 6:00 PM PST Tuesday, March 13, 2018 by Kenny Kramer

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.

Late Saturday we received reports of an [avalanche fatality](#) on Park Butte near Mt Baker. One snowmobiler was caught, carried, and killed in the accident.

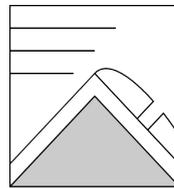
The Bottom Line: A refreezing snowpack will cause decreased danger Wednesday in most areas. Watch for fresh but shallow new Wind Slabs near ridges at higher elevations. Lingering hard wind slabs may still be found on lee slopes above treeline. Avoid steep slopes where recent winds have deposited snow.

| Elevation | Wednesday, March 14, 2018 | | 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. | Low |
| Below Treeline | Low | Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features. | Low |

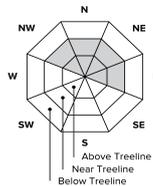
Avalanche Problems for Wednesday

Wind Slab

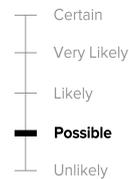
Wind slabs can take up to a week to stabilize. They are confined to lee and cross-loaded terrain features and can be avoided by sticking to sheltered or wind scoured areas.



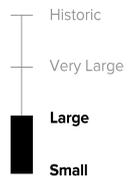
Avalanche Problem



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Avalanche Forecast for Wednesday

A strengthening surface crust will limit the avalanche danger at lower elevations Wednesday in the Mt Hood area. Shallow new snow may be transported near ridges, especially near and above treeline where small wind slabs may be possible to triggered on steep lee slopes. Avoid steep open slopes showing signs of recent wind loading.

Lingering hard wind slabs may still exist at higher elevations. You are most likely to find and trigger these avalanches on shaded slopes not receiving direct sunshine. Firm wind slabs can lure you far onto the slope before failing, creating a particularly dangerous situation. To avoid wind slabs, stay away from any steep slopes where you believe winds have recently deposited snow. If the snow below you feels hollow, seek lower angle terrain.

Limit your exposure to Mt Hood's very large avalanche paths Tuesday. Very large and difficult to predict wind slabs have formed high on the mountain above the forecast area. A very large avalanche initiating high above you may travel to your location. Similarly, limit your exposure to cornices above you.

Avalanche Summary

Sunshine and temperatures in the 40's to 50's over the past few days has allowed for significant snowpack settlement and for a variety of surface conditions to develop. Several melt-freeze cycles over the past few days has allowed for a strengthening snowpack. Steep shaded north facing slopes are hanging on to some settled old snow that fell Thursday.

Clear weather over the past few nights has allowed for surface hoar or near surface faceted snow to develop on many slopes. These surfaces are easily destroyed by wind or sun, rain or warming. Precipitation falling Tuesday afternoon began as rain in most areas and hopefully destroyed much of these surface crystals.

Six to eight inches of new snow fell with moderate winds Thursday night and Friday. Before cooling Thursday night, rain reached up to 6600 ft. Winds throughout the storm reshaped the snow surface. Firm wind slabs, snow drifts, and wind scoured surfaces have all been reported.

While we are tracking several layers deeper in the snowpack, there are currently no significant layers of concern.

Observations

Mt. Hood Meadows pro-patrol reported warmth and wet snow conditions on Sunday and again Monday, with generally small loose wet avalanches on steep sunny slopes.

NWAC Pro-Observer Laura Green traveled in the Mt Hood backcountry Friday. Laura found moderate to strong winds transporting snow throughout the day. Plumes were seen high on Mt Hood during the morning. She observed a variety of wind featured snow surfaces including large deep snow drifts, hard wind slabs, and uneven snow surfaces near and above treeline.

Mountain Weather Synopsis for Wednesday & Thursday

As a reminder, NWAC weather station data is in PST year round. A large upper level low pressure system well of the B.C. coast continues to move southward Wednesday afternoon. Showers have been rotating northward around the low affecting most areas at times, along with some sun breaks as well. A deep trough extends southward to off central California where greater energy is being directed. Some variant of this pattern will persist into the weekend, resulting in generally cool and showery weather at times, but very limited precipitation amounts. Freezing levels should remain relatively low over the next several days along with light winds. The upper low currently off the B.C. will move SSE over the next few days to be centered over the Oregon/California border by Thursday night. As the low moves south of the area, showers should decrease over most of the forecast area, with the Mt Hood area the most likely location to receive slightly greater shower activity. Only scattered showers are expected over the Olympics and WA Cascades with more widespread showers over the Mt Hood area.

Precipitation Forecast

| Location | Thu | Fri |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Hurricane Ridge | lt .10 | lt .10 |
| Mt Baker Ski Area | .25 | lt .10 |
| Washington Pass | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| Stevens Pass | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| Snoqualmie Pass | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| Mission Ridge | lt .10 | lt .10 |
| Crystal Mt | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| Paradise | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| White Pass | lt .25 | lt .10 |
| Mt Hood Meadows | lt .25 | lt .25 |
| Timberline | .25 | lt .25 |

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/Freezing Level (ft)

| Day | Snow/Freezing Level (ft) | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| | Hurricane Ridge | Mt. Baker | Washington Pass | Stevens Pass | Snoqualmie Pass | Crystal Mt. | Mt. Hood | Easterly Flow in the Cascade Passes |
| Wednesday Afternoon | 3000' | 3000' | 3000' | None' | None' | 3000' | None' | 3000' |
| Wednesday Night | 2000' | 2000' | 2000' | None' | None' | 2000' | None' | 2000' |
| Thursday Morning | 1500' | 1500' | 1500' | None' | None' | 1500' | None' | 1500' |
| Thursday Afternoon | 3500' | 3500' | 3500' | None' | None' | 3500' | None' | 3500' |
| Thursday Night | 2500' | 2500' | 2500' | None' | None' | 2500' | None' | 2500' |

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.