



Northwest
Avalanche
Center



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West Slopes North - Canadian Border to Skagit River

Issued: 6:26 PM PST Thursday, February 8, 2018 by Josh Hirshberg

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.

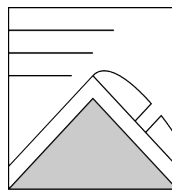
The Bottom Line: You can trigger Wind Slabs above treeline. Avoid stiff supportive pillows of snow and cross-loaded features on slopes 35 degrees and steeper. Strong and gusty winds may have formed Wind Slabs lower on slopes than where they typically form or in unique locations.

Elevation	Friday		Outlook for Saturday
Above Treeline	Moderate	Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify problem features.	Low
Near Treeline	Low	Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Low
Below Treeline	Low	Generally safe, watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Low

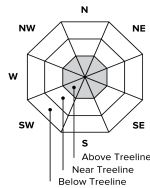
Avalanche Problems for Friday

Wind Slab

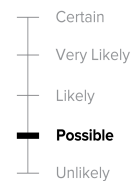
Wind slabs can take up to a week to stabilize. They are confined to lee and cross-loaded terrain features and can be avoided by sticking to sheltered or wind scoured areas.



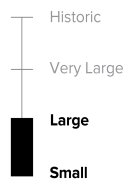
Avalanche Problem



Aspect/Elevation



Likelihood



Size

Avalanche Forecast for Friday

You can trigger recently formed Wind Slabs at upper elevations. You can stay safe by avoiding obviously wind loaded features. Cracking in the snow, stiff, supportive surfaces, and wind sculpted features are all indicators that you should avoid that piece of terrain. Very strong and gusty winds may have formed slabs where you would not normally see them. Use caution in areas that could be cross-loaded mid-slope.

Near and below treeline, avalanches are unlikely, though not impossible. Continue to use normal caution. Always carry a beacon, shovel, and probe and use travel practices that minimize your exposure to avalanche terrain. Stay out from under slopes where other parties may be traveling on wind exposed higher elevation slopes

There are some remaining considerations to stay safe in the mountains. While Glide avalanches are unlikely, they can be dangerously large and difficult to predict. It's worth giving these avalanches a little more time before we forget about them. Avoid stopping under slopes with steep rock slabs that are still holding snow. Avoid traveling near glide cracks as they can be dangerous if you fall in them. Many lower elevation slopes may be firm and icy. A slip and fall in steep terrain above rocks or cliffs could be dangerous.

Avalanche Summary

No avalanches have been reported in the past 24 hours. The most recently observed avalanche activity includes small Loose Wet avalanches around the West Slopes on Wednesday, shallow triggered Wind Slabs, and large Glide avalanches running on the 3rd and 4th. While we're still keeping an eye on some deeply buried crusts, there are no known Persistent Weak Layers in this zone.

Freezing levels are anticipated to drop to the valleys Thursday night. Light rain fell to upper elevations on Wednesday and Thursday with freezing levels reaching up to 5,000ft. Strong and gusty winds formed Wind Slabs above treeline on Tuesday through Thursday.

Observations

North

On Wednesday, NWAC Pro Observer Lee Lazzara was touring around Table Mountain. He found 2-6" of recent snow now moist on the surface above a mostly strong snowpack with no lingering instabilities. He saw lots of glide cracks which could be dangerous, particularly if covered by fresh snowfall in the future.

Mt. Baker Pro Patrol reported glide cracks were in the inbounds terrain on Tuesday. On Wednesday, they saw no natural wet activity and ski patrol was able to trigger one small Wind Slab avalanche.

Mountain Weather Synopsis for Friday & Saturday

Low level moisture, combined with a very weak passing small scale disturbance is maintaining a few showers into the afternoon Friday, mainly over the Mt Baker, Mt Rainier and the central Cascade passes. Showers should end by the evening with gradual clearing as the flow aloft becomes increasingly northerly. A strong upper ridge of high pressure remains offshore and will keep the Pacific Northwest cool with low freezing levels through Saturday and beyond. The ridge nudges closer to the coast and builds a little further northward Saturday allowing for clearing skies Friday night and plenty of sunshine for Saturday. The next disturbance to affect the area is slated for Sunday and this weak system will spread increasing clouds across the area late Saturday and Saturday night.

24 Hour Quantitative Precipitation ending at 4 am			Snow Level/Freezing Level in feet						
Location	Sat	Sun	Day	Olympics	Northwest Cascades	Northeast Cascades	Central Cascades	South Cascades	Easterly Flow in Passes
Hurricane Ridge	0	0	Friday Afternoon	1500'	1000'	1000'	2000'	2500'	
Mt Baker Ski Area	lt .10	0	Friday Night	1500'	1000'	1000'	1500'	2500'	
Washington Pass	0	0	Saturday Morning	2000'	2000'	3000'	3500'	4000'	
Stevens Pass	lt .10	0	Saturday Afternoon	3500'	3000'	3000'	3500'	5500'	
Snoqualmie Pass	lt .10	0	Saturday Night	3000'	1500'	2000'	2500'	6000'	
Mission Ridge	0	0	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.						
Crystal Mt	0	0	* Note that surface snow levels are common near the passes during easterly pass flow and may result in multiple snow / freezing levels.						
Paradise	lt .10	0							
White Pass	0	0							
Mt Hood Meadows	0	0							
Timberline	0	0							

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.

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.