

Chugach National Forest Avalanche Center Advisory Updates 2018

Happy New Year! Monday January 8, 2018 when you open the Turnagain Area Avalanche Advisory it will look different. We are making a few changes. Click here for a quick video tutorial: youtu.be/bmCQIZ_rD4k. These changes are part of a national push to have consistency between public avalanche advisories across the country and to help better define the avalanche hazard each day. Go to avalanche.org to look at other avalanche centers.

When you first open the advisory you will see The Bottom Line at the top of the page. This is the key message that you should remember as you plan your trip to the mountains. Just below will be the avalanche danger by elevation band. It's always good to remember road level at Turnagain Pass is 1000'.

Turnagain Area Avalanche Advisory

Tuesday, January 2nd 2018 4:25 am by Aleph Johnston-Bloom

ARCHIVED ADVISORY - All advisories expire after 24 hours from the posting date/time.



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The Bottom Line



The avalanche danger remains **HIGH** above 1000' due to rain, heavy wet snowfall and strong winds. Natural avalanches are likely and human triggered avalanches are very likely today. As the new snow, rain and wind overloads a weak layer of buried surface hoar and facets, avalanches are becoming larger and more dangerous. **Travel in avalanche terrain is NOT recommended.** This includes areas that are in the runout from avalanche paths above.

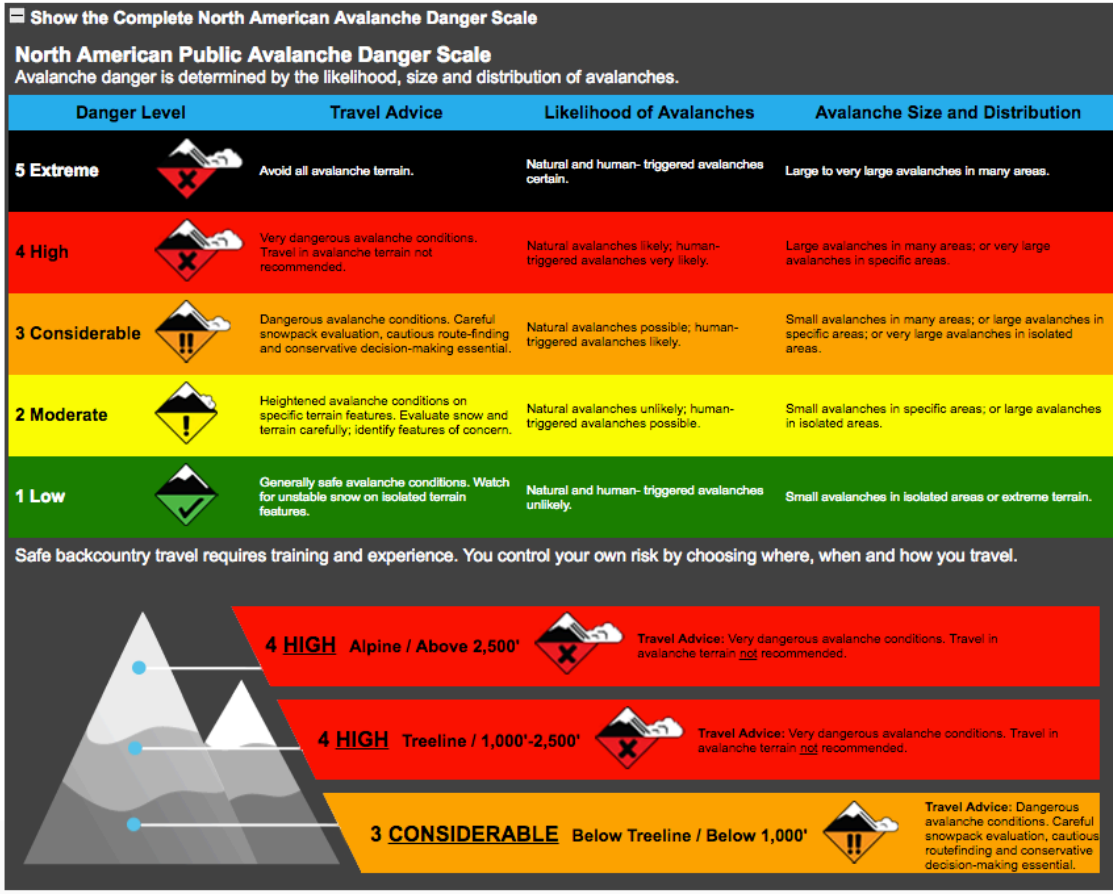
The avalanche danger is **CONSIDERABLE** below 1,000' where debris from avalanches above may run.

Show the Complete North American Avalanche Danger Scale



If you want to see the complete North American Danger Scale click on the plus sign in the left corner.

Did you know that 47% of avalanche fatalities occur at **CONSIDERABLE** and 34% occur at **MODERATE**? Understanding the danger scale is key!



Click here for a video tutorial on the danger scale: youtu.be/r_-KpOu7tbA

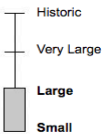
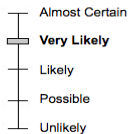
Below the Danger by elevation you will see Special Announcements if we have any and then Avalanche Problem 1. This used to be labeled the “Primary Concern.” Even though that title has been removed this Avalanche Problem is still our first concern for the day.

Special Announcement

Dangerous avalanche conditions are expected in the Southern Kenai Mountains (such as, Seward and Lost Lake) due to heavy snowfall.

Join CNFAIC on **Wednesday, January 3rd from 7pm - 8:30 pm at the Blue & Gold Boardshop** for a discussion on Understanding Weak Layers and the Current Snowpack at Turnagain Pass.

Avalanche Problem 1



This series of storms continues to build storm slabs and overload the weak layer of surface hoar and near surface facets that formed last week. Yesterday folks continued to trigger small avalanches in the Tincan Trees and **observed signs of instability including whumping, cracking and hand pits falling on isolation**. There was low visibility which made it difficult to see into the alpine but strong winds were rapidly loading leeward slopes. Sunburst saw gusts as high as 102 mph. Temperatures rose and the snow became more and more upside down. Since the storms started on Saturday, Center Ridge Snotel has received 1.8" of water and mid-elevation stations in Girdwood received 2.4" of water. This translates to 15-30" of total snow since Saturday up high. Unfortunately at lower elevations some of this precipitation came as rain overnight as temperatures rose and rain fell to as high as 2300'. Today the recipe for avalanches is pretty simple. Weak snow has been overloaded by heavy snow, wind loading or rain. Slabs in upper elevation terrain could be 2-4 feet thick. Travel in avalanche terrain (on slopes steeper than 30 degrees) is not recommended. Runout zones should also be avoided due to the potential for natural avalanches and as always steer clear of terrain traps. Even a small avalanche in the wrong spot could be very hazardous.


The Avalanche problem icons look totally different. There are still 9 avalanche problems but the graphics are all black and white and you will notice a few changes in the names. These icons were developed by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center with a lot of infographic research, and the principles of effective behavioral imagery taken into account. Click on the small blue (i) next to Avalanche Problem for a video tutorial on the avalanche problems and definitions for all 9 avalanche problems, shown here: <https://avalanche.org/avalanche-encyclopedia/avalanche-problem/> . You can also click on the specific avalanche problem icon to pull up the definition. It is really important to understand what kind of avalanche problem you are dealing with.

Special Announcement

Dangerous avalanche conditions are snowfall.

Join CNFAIC on **Wednesday, January** Layers and the Current Snowpack at Tu

Avalanche Problem 1 ⓘ



Storm Slabs

Storm Slab avalanches are the release of a cohesive layer (a slab) of new snow that breaks within new snow or on the old snow surface. Storm-slabs typically last between a few hours and few days (following snowfall). Storm-slabs that form over a persistent weak layer (surface hoar, depth hoar, or near-surface facets) may be termed Persistent Slabs or may develop into Persistent Slabs.

Chance

- Almost Certain
- Very Likely
- Likely
- Possible
- Unlikely


Size

- Historic
- Very Large
- Large
- Small

This series of storms continues to build storm slabs and overload the weak layer of surface hoar and near surface facets that formed last week. Yesterday folks continued to trigger small avalanches in the Tincan Trees and **observed signs of instability including whumping, cracking**

There are also two new features, the **Chance** slider bar and the **Size** slider bar. These tie into the North American Danger Scale and help illustrate the likelihood of triggering and size of avalanches you can expect with avalanche problem 1 and 2 on a given day. It is important to note that **Large** is big enough to injure or kill a person. Click link below and Scroll to bottom for descriptions: <https://avalanche.org/avalanche-encyclopedia/avalanche-problem/>

Avalanche Problem 2 ⓘ



Wet Slab

Chance

- Almost Certain
- Very Likely
- Likely
- Possible
- Unlikely

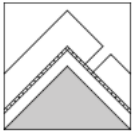
Size

- Historic
- Very Large
- Large
- Small

Rain fell overnight to as high as 2300'. It is adding weight to the already stressed snowpack and breaking bonds between snow grains. Water saturating new snow could cause **natural wet loose or wet slab avalanches**. Triggering wet avalanches in the treeline elevation band is also likely today in steep terrain. This is another reason travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended today.

If we have an additional avalanche concern for the day we will have an avalanche problem in the Additional Concern section. There will not be a Chance or Size slider bar but you can click on the Avalanche Problem icon for a definition and we will give a description of where you should be looking for this specific avalanche problem in the terrain.

Additional Concern



Deep Persistent Slabs

In the alpine, above 3,000', rapidly loading slopes may awaken a large and dangerous deep slab avalanche. At these elevations, a hard slab, 3-5+ feet thick, is sitting on top of weak sugary snow (**basal facets**) near the ground. **As new snow increases the load over this snowpack structure during the current storms, there will be the potential for large natural avalanches. Between storms, human triggered deep slab avalanches will be possible.** This is a high consequence avalanche problem that is impossible to outsmart and can take a long time to heal. Keep this in mind as breaks between storms may allow for travel to the Alpine.

As you scroll towards the bottom of the page our Mountain Weather, 24 hour Data and Winter Snowmachine Use Open/Closed Status and Riding Conditions Updates sections will all look the same. We will continue to have photos and link to observations and definitions in our forecasts. Please ask questions and let us know what you think. We are always trying to make this product more useful for our users... That means you! Email staff@chugachavalanche.org.

Thanks for all your observations! Please send us what you see out there. Follow the Friends of the CNFAIC on Facebook and @chugachavy on Instagram. Stay safe in 2018!