

Weather Discussion

The closed low off California has been reluctant to move east but it is finally heading our way. It will arrive later, and leave at a similar time, as earlier forecasts. We still get a storm, just with shallower accumulations because the duration is shorter. If it is any compensation, Tuesday's trough looks like it is taking a track more favorable for Colorado.

Clouds have spread over much of the state, and southerly winds are increasing in speed. The clouds will lower and thicken and the windspeeds get faster as the low approaches. Light snow may start in the Southern and Central Mountains this morning, but the heavier snowfall comes later this afternoon. Cold air will slide in from the west, and moist air from the south. They combine over the San Juans this afternoon, and spread to the Central Mountains after dark. The closed low will open up once it reaches the Four Corners, and the trough axis will head east after midnight. As it does, windspeeds will drop and flop to the west or northwest. These flows favor the Steamboat and the northern Front Range zones, and their best chance of snow will be between midnight and noon on Monday. Light snow will continue in the other zones. Monday afternoon the southwesterly upper level flow returns as Tuesday's trough bears down. The southwesterly flow intensifies snowfall over the San Juan and Central Mountains.

Weather Forecast

Table with 4 columns: Fields, Sunday, Sunday Night, Monday. Rows include Temperature (°F), Wind Speed (mph), Wind Direction, Sky Cover, and Snow (in).

Snowpack Discussion

Sunday's forecast snow amount will begin to increase the avalanche danger. You might find reactive new slabs where the snow drifts more than 6 inches deep. There are potential weak layers under the new slabs. Near surface facets, the recycled powder on shady slopes, is the weakest. Near surface facets are most likely on north, northeast, and east aspects near and below treeline. The snowpack may be completely faceted and rotten in open areas below treeline. You will want to check out the older snow underneath the latest. Do this for each, individual slope. With the mix of weak layers conditions may change over short distances.

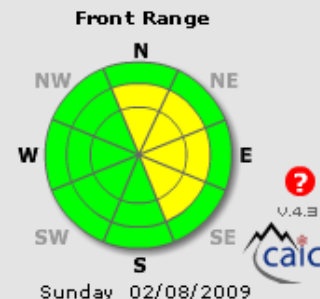
You can still find older buried weak layers and areas of instability. Areas near treeline have the most complicated and variable snowpack, and are the most likely areas to trigger avalanches. On Thursday a skier triggered and was buried to the waist in an avalanche that started near treeline on a S to SE aspect in First Creek near Berthoud Pass. The slide started on a 35 degree slope, and was 3 feet deep, 60 feet wide, and ran about 300 vertical. Fortunately the group was able to free the buried party and no injuries were reported. On Wednesday, a slide in the Cameron Pass area was triggered when a skier landed a jump. The slide was small, but the crown was 4 feet deep and the slide ran to the ground. It was on a northeast aspect near treeline.

Avalanche Danger

The avalanche danger for the Front Range zone is MODERATE on N-NE-E-SE aspects near and above treeline. Thin, fresh slabs may be tender where more than 6 inches of snow accumulates. Old hard slabs are possible on steep slopes, and could avalanche large. The danger is LOW on other aspects near and above treeline. Below treeline the danger is LOW.

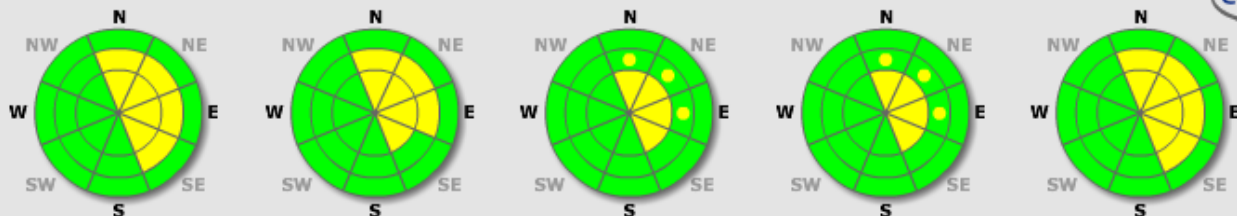
Avalanche Danger Scale

Block



Danger Rose Trend

5 Day Trend: Front Range



Tuesday 02/03/2009 Wednesday 02/04/2009 Thursday 02/05/2009 Friday 02/06/2009 Saturday 02/07/2009

