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Backcountry Forecasts

Morning Backcountry Avalanche Forecast for Front Range

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Issued 02/21/2009 6:35 AM by John Snook

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Northwest flow continues this morning ahead of an approaching ridge of high pressure currently over the Great Basin. Gusty winds will continue this morning east of the Continental Divide. High pressure exerts its influence by Saturday afternoon with abundant sunshine, moderating temperatures and less wind. The ridge flattens on Sunday and winds shift to westerly. A sunny morning will give way to afternoon cloudiness as moisture begins to move in from the west. In a pattern similar to last week, low pressure develops off the West Coast which starts to spin some moisture toward Colorado in zonal flow. It does not look too impressive at this time, but periods of orographically driven light mountain snowfall can be expected through much of next week.

[Weather Forecast](#)

Fields	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
Temperature (°F)	28 to 33	18 to 23	32 to 37
Wind Speed (mph)	15 to 25	15 to 25	15 to 25
Wind Direction	WNW	W	W
Sky Cover	Clear	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
Snow (in)	0	0	0 to 2

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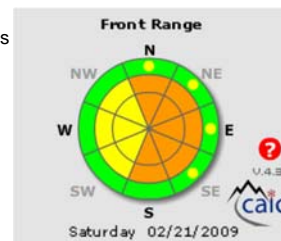
Winds gusted strong again from the west to northwest sometimes reaching 80 mph. A cold front pushed down along the east side of the Continental Divide which generated 2-4" of new snow. An observer near Berthoud Pass found no cracking or whumpfing near and below treeline, but did see areas with large pregnant pillows of wind drifted snow. An observation from the Montgomery Pass area on Thursday indicated some cracking and instability with test results about 25 cm deep on WSW aspects that indicate some weaknesses to be aware of as we move into the weekend. These were mostly near or above treeline.

High pressure is starting to influence Colorado on Saturday. Sunny skies and lighter winds will start to trend the avalanche danger downward. We will, however, hold the avalanche danger steady for one more day through Saturday. Expect to find tender wind slabs on N-E-S aspects. Human triggered slides are still probable in these areas. Winds and fresh snow have been building slab on aspects facing generally east for the past week. More snow and wind have likely created another layer. Blue skies are a good trigger for luring people into big lines, but the threat of shallow slides still remains on the steep terrain. Fractures are most likely in the 1-2 foot deep range, which is certainly deep enough to cause problems, so choose terrain wisely to avoid terrain traps and always have a planned escape route.

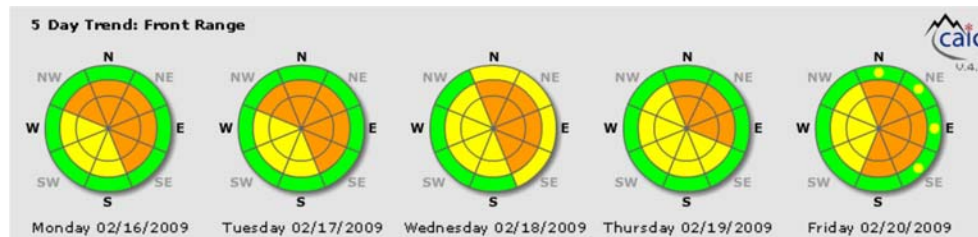
[Avalanche Danger](#)

The avalanche danger for the Front Range zone is CONSIDERABLE near and above treeline on N-NE-E-SE-S aspects. The danger is MODERATE near and above treeline on SW-W-NW aspects. It is LOW below treeline with pockets of MODERATE on N-NE-E-SE aspects for shallow fresh slabs on steeper terrain features like cross loaded gullies and steep open areas.

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