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**Backcountry Forecasts**

**Morning Backcountry Avalanche Forecast for Front Range**

Printer Friendly

Issued 02/28/2009 6:05 AM by Spencer Logan

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You will want to lather up on sunscreen today. Skies cleared overnight as the last storm pulled east and a high pressure ridge settled over the Great Basin. We will see clear skies and moderate to light northwest winds today. The cold air that came in Friday night will temper today's sun, and today's temperatures from getting too hot. Temperatures will warm through the weekend, and Sunday will be quite warm, if not hot. The trough axis shifts east Sunday afternoon. That allows clouds in on west and southwest flow, with a stronger system for the last half of the week.

[Weather Forecast](#)

Fields	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
Temperature (°F)	28 to 33	10 to 15	40 to 45
Wind Speed (mph)	15 to 25	5 to 15	15 to 25
Wind Direction	NW	W	W
Sky Cover	Clear	Clear	Mostly Clear
Snow (in)	0	0	0

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Snow accumulations have varied across the zone over the last few days. Most locations received 5 to 8 inches of new snow, with some spots picking up almost 12 inches. Winds have been light to moderate from the west, and drifting snow into fresh slabs on the lee aspects above treeline. The slabs are over a foot thick and fairly easy to trigger. On Thursday observers reported several rider triggered avalanches above treeline near Berthoud Pass. They were shallow, involving just the new snow, but ran a good distance. Shooting cracks were common in loaded terrain. The snow underneath the slabs ranges from slick crusts on east to south aspects, thinner, softer crusts on east and northeast aspects, and maybe even some small facets on north aspects.

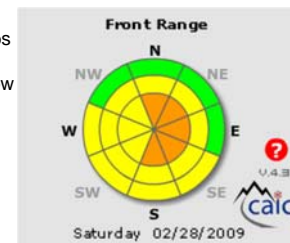
Cornices have become corpulent, obese, or just plain fat...so stay out of their way. It would not be pleasant to be on the slope underneath when one falls. There will be sofa- or car-sized blocks tumbling down, even if the cornice fall does not trigger an avalanche.

Below treeline, winds have been light, and observers report good bonding between the new snow and the warmer snow surface from earlier this week. Earlier this week there were some really warm temperatures below 10,000 feet, and there may still be wet layers in the middle or bottom of the snowpack. The cold snap Friday night helped lock up the snowpack, but temperature will climb rapidly in Saturday's sun. Lower elevation slopes are tricky right now. New snow can warm quickly and run in shallow avalanches with an hour or two of direct sun. Older, wet layers can be problematic if the overlying snow gets warm and loses strength. If you find old snow layers that pack into a good snowball, or your boots easily penetrate through the surface layers in to coarse, grainy snow, you should avoid steep, complex terrain at low elevations.

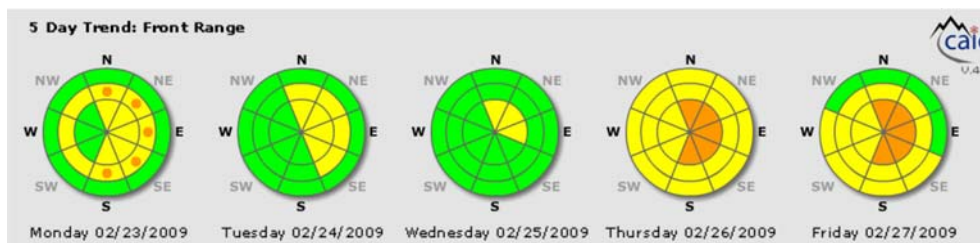
[Avalanche Danger](#)

Above treeline the danger is CONSIDERABLE on N-NE-E-SE-S aspects. Recent snow has drifted into reactive slabs in leeward start zones. Cornices are reaching critical mass. It will take several days for these slabs to bond to the underlying snow. The danger is MODERATE on other aspects above treeline, and on all aspects near treeline. Below treeline there is a MODERATE danger on SE-S-SW-W aspects. Check for wet snow on low elevation slopes, and avoid steep terrain if you find it. The danger is LOW on other aspects.

[Avalanche Danger Scale](#)



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