

Backcountry

Backcountry Avalanche Forecast for Front Range

Printer Friendly

Forecasts

Issued 01/30/2010 6:33 AM by Simon Trautman

Weather Forecasts

Avalanche

Forecasts

Steamboat & Flat
Tops

Front Range

Vail & Summit

County

Sawatch Range

Aspen

Gunnison

Grand Mesa

Northern San Juan

Southern San Juan

Sangre de Cristo

Watches &

Warnings

Help/About

About the Forecasts

Using the Forecasts

Forecast Zones

Follow CAIC

Avalanche Danger

Scale

Using the Danger

Rose

Download

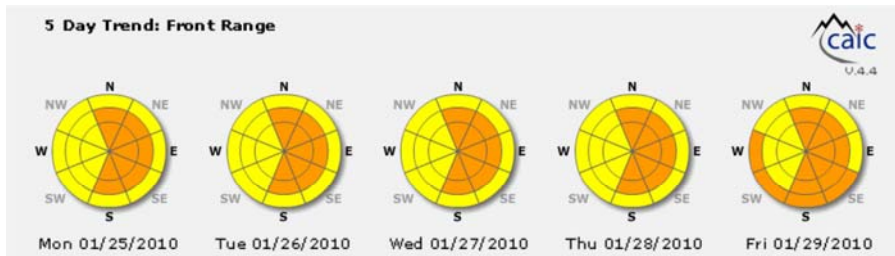
Highlights

Today warming temperatures could become an issue. Recent snow is sitting on weak facets or old windslabs. Stress will increase as the recent snow warms up and it will become more sensitive. Very steep, sunny slopes below treeline could also be problematic as the day warms.

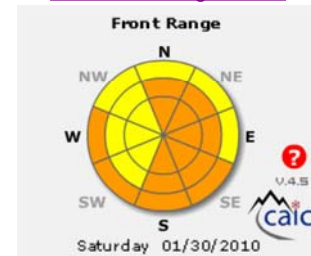
Avalanche Danger

The avalanche danger for the Front Range zone is CONSIDERABLE on N-E-S facing aspects near and above treeline. The danger will rise to CONSIDERABLE on southeast, south, southwest, and west aspects below treeline as the snow surface warms. Elsewhere, the danger is MODERATE.

We appreciate knowing what you see in the backcountry. You can [submit observations here](#).



Avalanche Danger Scale



Snow & Avalanche Discussion

Warm temperatures Friday contributed to surficial sluffing and point releases on steep sunny slopes. That trend will continue today, especially in places that did not see activity yesterday. Light winds accompanied the most recent snowfall. You can find a few pockety soft slabs above treeline. The bigger problem is the weekend snow and winds that formed widespread windslabs near and above treeline. These slabs sit on mid-pack facted layer that has been around for several weeks.

Early in the week strong winds east of the Divide overloaded a few slopes and triggered shallow natural avalanches. Tuesday, explosive control triggered an avalanche on a southeast aspect above treeline. It was a hard slab that broke to the ground, but the full width of the path. Activity like that is a reminder that, though the snowpack is gaining strength, there are areas weak enough to produce avalanches. If you hit the right spot you could trigger an avalanche that is big enough to kill a person or destroy a car or small building.

Below treeline, the recent snow is resting on weak, faceted junk. For fun, there are some decomposing crusts and interfaces mixed in. Where the recent snow is supportable, it is a potential slab. Where it is not supportable, you wallow to knees or waist, no matter how wide your planks. Thursday morning, snowboarders triggered two avalanches north of Berthoud Pass on northerly and easterly aspects below treeline. Today's increasing temperatures will stress the recent snow and make avalanches more likely in very steep terrain. If you get something to go, it will likely plow down to the layers just above the ground.

Weather Discussion

Colorado is under northwesterly flow as an upper level ridge moves east. Flow will swing to the southwest late Saturday night as the ridge passes and a low pressure system moves into Idaho. Clouds will increase ahead of the trough, but any precipitation will hold off until Sunday night. The coming storm system is tracking further north than recent storms, with the low centered over southwestern Montana on Sunday. This trajectory will favor the Northern Mountains, but current model runs show most of the moisture staying north of the Colorado border.

Weather Forecast

Fields	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
Temperature (°F)	30 to 35	20 to 25	25 to 30
Wind Speed (mph)	10 to 20	15 to 25	10 to 20
Wind Direction	W	WSW	W
Sky Cover	Mostly Clear	Increasing	Mostly Cloudy
Snow (in)	0	0	0 to 1

Archived Forecasts

Select 2010/01/30