



# Backcountry Avalanche Forecast for Front Range



Issued: 01/16/2011 5:46 AM by Scott Toepfer

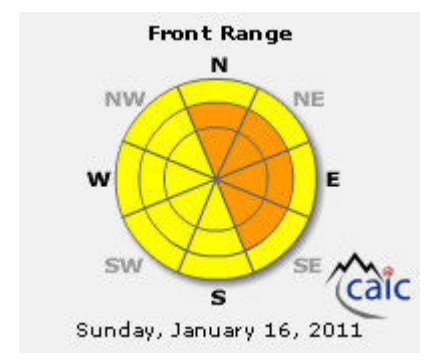
## Highlights

Westerly winds in the Front Range have begun to ramp upwards again. There are some problems accessing remote stations this morning but overnight a half inch to an inch and a half of new snow have been observed across the southern end of the zone. Buried weak layers remain in most areas, but reported avalanche activity has been limited to areas near Berthoud Pass. I expect to issue an avalanche watch later Sunday afternoon. Monday we expect an increase in avalanche danger.

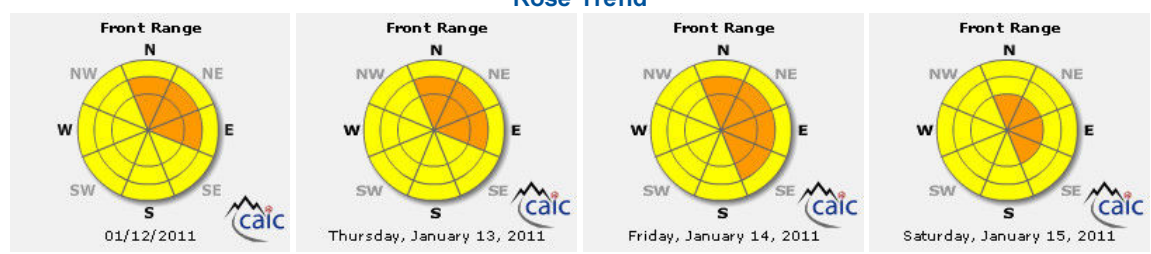
## Avalanche Danger

The avalanche danger in the Front Range Zone is CONSIDERABLE (Level 3) on N-NE-E-SE aspects near and above treeline. The danger is MODERATE (Level 2) on all other aspects and elevations. Expect an increase in the danger Sunday night into Monday. I anticipate issuing an avalanche watch later Sunday afternoon for this zone.

North America has adopted new definitions for the danger scale this season. Check out those updates [here](#).



## Rose Trend



## Snow & Avalanche Discussion

With increasing winds and just a skiff of new snow we do not expect to see much fresh slab development this morning. However there is a change brewing on the close horizon. Winds will continue to increase, with some 5 to 11 inches of new snow over the next 24 hours. If the new snow verifies backcountry users can expect an increasing avalanche danger to develop Sunday night.

Last Friday there was a small human triggered avalanche in the Jones Pass area. It was on a north-facing slope above treeline in a wind-loaded pocket. Thursday there was a human triggered avalanche on a southeast facing slope near treeline on Berthoud Pass. The side was about a foot deep and less than 100 feet wide. Avalanche workers in the area also triggered avalanches with explosives on northeast and east facing above treeline slopes. These avalanches are wind slabs running on buried surface hoar.

There are two avalanche issues to consider today. Continued westerly winds are building wind slabs in alpine areas. These are not huge slabs, but they could be over a foot deep. You are most likely to find them in exposed alpine areas that face the east half of the compass. There are many cross-loaded terrain features, such as gullies and subridges.

There are also several buried persistent weak layers in our snowpack. These are surface facets and surface hoar that formed between storms earlier this month. In some areas these are reactive, but don't have very much snow on top of them. The wind has been moving a lot of snow around in the high country and areas with thick slabs on top of one of these layers could be quite dangerous.

For the last month we have been talking about weak snow near the ground. This remains an issue, but is becoming less of a concern. With the snowpack in the Front Range it is probably not a good idea to forget about the weak facets or facet/crust combination near the ground. However, layers in the upper and mid portions of our snowpack have been more reactive over the last two weeks.

## Weather Discussion for 11,000ft

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A high pressure ridge remains over the west coast into Monday, keeping Colorado under northwest winds. Our next snow event is crossing the Wasatch of Utah very early this morning. This low-pressure trough will move into Colorado on strengthening northwest winds and arrives a little before noon Sunday. This will produce a nice shot of snow from Sunday afternoon through Tuesday. The jet stream is over Colorado into

Wednesday morning and this means we can expect to see some significant snow transport near and above treeline for the next few days. The most recent model runs hold off on any real precipitation in the Southern Mountains until mid-day on Monday. Storm totals for favored zones should be in the 1 to 2 foot range over about the next 48 hours.

<b>Weather Forecast</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Sunday Night</b>	<b>Monday</b>
Temperature (°F)	22 to 27	17 to 22	18 to 23
Wind Speed (mph)	15-25G50	15-25G50	20-30 G50s
Wind Direction	W	NW	WNW
Sky Cover	Increasing	Overcast	Overcast
Snow (in)	1 to 3	4 to 8(N)	5 to 10

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