

Observation Guide:

A simple framework for efficiently documenting key factors and creating a consistent record of your day.

Context/Summary

- Overview of Terrain Traveled and Terrain Viewed
- Uncertainties Relating to Today's Hazard(s)
- Today's Goal (Optional)

Key observations (in rough order of significance)

Signs of Instability

- Avalanches
 - Type, Trigger, Size, Distribution, Time or Approximation of Time, Bed Surface
- Collapsing or Whumpfing
 - Shooting Cracks (More Than a Ski/Board/Sled length) or Localized Cracking
- Results of Informal Stability Tests
 - Test Slopes, Slope Cuts, Switchback Corners, Travel Above Uptrack, Tilt Test
- Pinwheels or Rollerballs
- OR -
 - No Signs of Instability

Recent Weather Conditions or Effects

- Local Wind (Speed and Direction) and Blowing Snow (Amount, Location, Distribution)
- Rapid Warming
 - Tree Bombing, Solar Radiation, Liquid Water Percolation, Melt Grooves, Rapid Settlement
- Visibility
 - Cloud Cover
 - Fog or Valley Cloud or Riming (Top and Bottom Elevations)

Snow Surface Conditions

- Dry or Wet Snow, Surface Hoar, Crust
- Recent Snow Totals
- Drifts, Cornices, Ripples, Scouring, Sastrugi
- Surface Penetration
- Hollow or Drum-like Sounds

Snowpack Evaluation* - Summarize Snowpack Structure Relating to Layer(s) of Concern or Trends

Spatial and Temporal Variability

Remaining Uncertainties

Closing Summary (Optional)

- Summary of Riding Conditions or Access
- Noteworthy Mitigation in the Terrain

*Snowpack Summary:

- Snow Pit Data: Aspect, Elevation, Height of Snow
 - Hardness Profile and Temperature Gradient
 - Stability Test Results
 - Fracture Characteristics/Shear Quality, Propagation Potential, Repeatability
- Form and Size (Precip. Particles, Surface Faceted Crystals or Surface Hoar, Crust, Graupel, Wet Snow)
 - Recent Snow: Amount, Distribution, Notable SWE, Snowfall Intensity, Crystal Type, Upside Down
 - Crust: Thickness, Distribution, Formation
 - Weak Layer and Slab Properties: Depth, Thickness, Grain Size, Grain Type, Distribution, Density, Formation, State of Metamorphism
 - Interfaces: Density Changes, Crusts With or Without Facets, Grain Bonding, Free-Water Content (If Any)