

News From The  
White Mountain  
National Forest

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U.S. Forest Service Snow Rangers are warning spring visitors to Tuckerman Ravine that conditions are changing rapidly and that having up-to-date information is vital to a safe and enjoyable outing.

“New crevasses are opening in the Bowl every day,” says U.S. Forest Service Snow Ranger Chris Joosen. Joosen is preparing for another busy weekend as the crowds begin to arrive at the base of the ravine in search of spring skiing that makes Tuckerman Ravine so well known. “We had a return to winter conditions a week ago after 14 inches of new snow but it’s totally different today and visitors need to have realistic expectations.”

Over the course of a “normal” March and April the northeast’s highest summit picks up an average of 92 inches of snow. This year the summit weather observers tallied a mere 38 inches. “Last week’s storm lengthened our season a little but the normal springtime hazards are back and they’re rearing their ugly heads,” says Snow Ranger Justin Preisendorfer. “Crevasses, icefall and undermining of the snow pack from rushing meltwater below the surface have all increased during the past week of warm weather but the crowds are still showing up.”

Luckily the Snow Rangers will once again have the assistance of the Mount Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol to help spread safety information about mountain hazards. Last Saturday the Ski Patrol assisted the Snow Rangers on one of the busiest days of the season when over 2500 people visited the ravine. On Saturday alone the Patrol and Snow Rangers provided medical care to a half dozen injured skiers and snowboarders, some of whom required technical rescue. When visitors triggered three separate avalanches in the ravine they stood by ready for a search of the debris but luckily no one was buried.

“The secret to having a fun, safe time on Mt Washington is being here at the right time with the right equipment and having flexible plans,” says Joosen. “You need to recognize the various hazards, ask questions of those who work here, and make smart, well-informed decisions.”

Sunny days may mean better skiing but they often mean elevated danger of icefall as well, especially in locations like the well known Lunch Rocks. This spot has long been a popular place to sit and watch the action but many visitors don’t realize how dangerous the area can be. Thousands of pounds of ice cling to the cliffs above Lunch Rocks and every spring it eventually comes crashing down. Many people have been hurt and killed by falling ice on Mt Washington and the hazard becomes a main issue in the Snow Rangers’ spring safety message. “We’ve been flip-flopping between winter and late

spring on a regular basis this year and each season has a unique set of hazards,” says Preisendorfer. “Check out our website before you come and make sure you plan for the expected, not the desired, conditions.” Visitors are encouraged to check [www.tuckerman.org](http://www.tuckerman.org) or call the U.S. Forest Service at (603)466-2713 for the most up to date conditions before visiting the ravine.

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