The prime climbing and ski season has officially passed, and summer is starting to take its toll on Mt Hood. A few climbers are still managing to summit via the Old Chute, but increased rock/icefall, wet loose avalanches, large sluff channels, and open bergschrunds make summit attempts a riskier endeavor than previous months. If you decide to climb this time of year, start early while the snow is still firm, carry the proper gear (ice axe/crampons/helmet), and don’t hesitate to turn around if the conditions don’t feel right.

WEATHER NOTES: Above normal temperatures will persist until next weekend. During this period look for highs temperatures to climb into the 50’s each day with overnight lows only dipping into the 40’s. Tuesday/Tuesday night are forecast to be the hottest part of the week. Despite these warm temperatures, clear skies should help surfaces firm up on the upper mountain most nights, especially within the Old Chute.

SNOW AND ROUTE CONDITIONS: The lower mountain is melting rapidly. You’ll have to hike over 500 ft on dry ground to reach continues snow on the south side climbing route. Once you hit snow, continue to follow the designed uphill route and don’t skin or climb up open ski trails. The upper mountain snowpack is still holding on, but its looking rougher by the day. The Old Chute area has large sluff channels that make ski descents heinous and open berschurunds & glide cracks scattered beneath the Hogsback.

The Old Chute via the lower traverse from the Hogsback will continue to be the preferred south-side route to the summit for climbers. However, keep in mind that this section is where most accidents occur and it exposes you to significant ice/rock fall this time of year, so start early or consider waiting until next season for better conditions.

North side routes have dwindling coverage and are becoming more technical as crevasses continue to grow. Despite this, North side routes have dwindling coverage and are becoming more technical as crevasses continue to grow. However, keep in mind that this section is where most accidents occur and it exposes you to significant ice/rock fall this time of year, so start early or consider waiting until next season for better conditions.

Skiers and snowboarders seeking summer turns on the south side can still find OK riding conditions below Crater Rock. These lower angled slopes offer smoother, less runneled surfaces than the steeper terrain above. Other popular ski descents like the Wy’East face still go but require significant travel on dry ground before reaching continues snow.

MOUNTAIN HAZARDS: Regardless of the time of year, many hazards continue to pose significant threat to climbers.

Icefall and Rockfall: Ice and rockfall will be your primary concern while climbing Mt Hood this time of year. This hazard usually becomes more active during the late morning hours as temperatures heat up, but keep in mind that each passing night without a proper refreeze, you may find ice and rock shedding earlier than you may expect. Being struck by a chunk of ice or rock could really ruin your day, so always wear a helmet, climb early, and don’t linger in locations, like the Old Chute, that expose you to this hazard.

Glacial Features: There are many open crevasses and bergschrunds across the mountain that will act as a serious hazard to climbers and skiers. These gaping cracks will only continue to grow as days pass, so give crevasses areas a wide buffer and carry crevasse rescue gear if you travel on glaciated routes. The White River Canyon hosts some of the largest crevasses on the south side. Some of these cracks can sneak up on you while descending, so stick further west and don’t descend too far into the White River Canyon to avoid these large cracks.

Long, Sliding Falls: A recent long, sliding fall accident in the Old Chute last week serves as a reminder that snow surfaces are often bulletproof in the early morning hours, despite the warm daytime temperatures. These long, sliding falls have proven very dangerous or even deadly on Mt Hood. So, it will be absolutely necessary to bring the crampons, ice axe, and the ability to move carefully over consequential terrain.

Avalanches: Wet loose avalanches should continue to be on your radar in steep snow during the summer. You can manage this hazard by avoiding steep slopes once the snow becomes sloppy and unconsolidated during the late morning and afternoon hours. Always carry a beacon, shovel, and probe when venturing into steep upper mountain terrain. The Northwest Avalanche Center may have concluded avalanche forecasts for the summer season, but their website still serves as an excellent resource for weather, snowpack, and avalanche observations.

ACCESS AND PARKING: The Salmon River lot at the Timberline ski area remains the primary point of access to the upper mountain from the south. The Cloud Cap Road is now open on the north side.

PERMITS AND HUMAN WASTE PACK OUT: The Mt. Hood Climbing Permit is required for all travel above 9,500’. Wilderness permits are required year-round on the South Side climbing routes. Your 3-day climbing permit doubles as your wilderness permit. Please carry a WAG bag (human waste pack out bag) and use it if you need to defecate while on the mountain. WAG bags are available for free of charge at the Climbers’ Registration near the entry to the Wy’East Day Lodge at Timberline. Climbing Register forms are highly recommended. These forms are not checked to ensure that climbers have safely returned, but they provide rescuers valuable information if a rescue is initiated on your behalf.

-Joe Dellaporta, Climbing Ranger

REMEMBER: You are responsible for your safety. Those planning to climb should take all necessary equipment for self-rescue and extended stays on the mountain due to weather or incident. There are no emergency medical services available on the mountain. It is a remote location. Any help may be hours or days out, especially in situations where your location or weather would create an unsafe situation for rescuers. It is always advisable to leave your itinerary and estimated time of return with a third party. Climbers Registration is in the Wy’East Day Lodge at Timberline.