

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 25, 2012

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 25 at 7:30 a.m. Northern Lights Trading Company and Alpine Orthopedics sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

In the last 24 hours mountain temperatures have risen to 20F with strong westerly winds blowing 25-30 mph and gusts over 50 mph. Scattered snow showers dusted the Bridger Range and dropped 1-2 inches everywhere else. Continued showers today and tonight will drop 2-4 inches favoring the southern areas. Winds will remain strong and temperatures will hover near 20F. Tomorrow looks to be the snowiest day of the week.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The southern Madison and southern Gallatin Ranges, Lionhead area near West Yellowstone and mountains around Cooke City:

The southern mountains, including Cooke City and the Lionhead area, have serious stability concerns ([video](#)). Mark and Karl were in Lionhead yesterday. Avalanches from the weekend were numerous; however, what gave them pause was a large, fresh, natural avalanche that broke with only two inches of new snow ([photo](#)). They dutifully dug snowpits, but found inconsistent results in their stability tests. No matter, recent avalanches provided the bulls-eye information they were looking for. The snowpack is weak and unsupportable. Carving a turn would easily sink the track down into the facets. Foot penetration was to the ground. A skier in the Bacon Rind area commented it was easy to investigate the snowpack when it's at chest level. Snow during the past week has created slabs and increased stress. A few collapses and poor stability test results were all he needed to stick to sub 30-degree slopes.

The Cooke City area has gotten snow nine out of the last ten days. Natural avalanches and many human triggered slides, some triggered from afar, partially buried snowmobilers on Saturday and again on Monday ([photo](#)). Remote triggering is scary stuff since we can release avalanches from flat terrain, hundreds of feet below the starting zone. Seeing natural avalanches in Lionhead after a paltry two inch snowstorm, plus remote triggering in Cooke City is conclusive evidence that the avalanche danger is rated CONSIDERABLE on all slopes today.

The Bridger, northern Madison and northern Gallatin Ranges:

The snowpack in the mountains around Bozeman and Big Sky is weak, but not terribly unstable. Digging out large, faceted grains in my snowpits remind me of playing in a sandbox. Although winds have blown the foot of new snow from this weekend around, these fresh slabs have not created widespread instability. Eric was on Buck Ridge yesterday and did not see any new avalanche activity. In Beehive/Bear Basin on Sunday I found the snowpack to still break near the ground on facets, but it took quite a bit of force and was not breaking immediately under the new snow, which is where avalanches on Friday were releasing ([video](#) and [photo](#)). As long as there are buried facets breaking in my stability tests I'm treating the snowpack with extra respect. Today, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE on all slopes since it's possible to trigger a slide, especially on fresh wind slabs.

Mark will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations, drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

Events/Education

Bozeman

[Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course](#). TONIGHT. NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED!! MSU, SUB Ballroom C, 7-9:30 p.m. Jan 25 and 26 with a field day Jan 28.

[Advanced Avalanche Workshop with Field Course](#). MSU, Wednesday and Thursday, February 1 and 2 from 7-9:00 p.m. with a field day Saturday, February 4. [Advanced registration](#) is required.

Helena

1-hour Avalanche Awareness lecture at Exploration Works on Tuesday, January 31 at 6:30 p.m. Call 457-1800 or check our [calendar](#) for more information.

Dillon

[Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course](#). Lectures on Saturday, February 4 with a field day Sunday, February 5. [Advanced registration](#) is required.