

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Oct 26, 2012

UPDATE: Wednesday, October 31

The full accident report can be viewed [HERE](#).

UPDATE: Monday, October 29

Three Skiers Partially Buried and One Injured in Bridger Range

On Sunday, October 28, three skiers were in the northern Bridger Range ascending a south facing slope immediately south of Frazier Basin when they triggered an avalanche. All three were partially buried with one injured. The avalanche was triggered near the ridgeline as they were skinning uphill. They felt the slope collapse with a “whumph” and saw the slope fracture above them which swept all three to the bottom, but not before beating them up on the rocky bed surface with one suffering a deep knee laceration and hip injury. Luckily they were not completely buried in the slide. The skiers were buried to their chest or armpits. At noon they called Gallatin County Search and Rescue to toboggan the injured skier out which was completed by 3:30 p.m. This time of year the best skiing will be found on wind-loaded slopes where the snow is deepest and also avalanche prone. This accident reinforces the behavior of only traveling one at a time in avalanche terrain and carrying rescue gear.

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with an early season avalanche information bulletin issued on Friday, October 26, 2012. This bulletin is sponsored by Montana Import Group in partnership with the Friends of the Avalanche Center. We will update this bulletin as conditions warrant.

Mountain Weather

A weak ridge of high pressure is building over the region producing clear skies and calm conditions. Currently, mountain temperatures are ranging from the single digits to mid-teens and winds are blowing out of the WNW at 5-15 mph. Today, the ridge will begin to break down as another storm system approaches from the west. Temperatures will warm into the 20s today and winds will gradually increase blowing 15-25 out of the WNW. Snow showers should arrive around midnight and will remain over the area through tomorrow. Accumulations of 1-3 inches are possible by tomorrow afternoon. The storm will push east by Saturday night and Sunday looks to be a nicer day.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

SNOWPACK AND AVALANCHE:

Yesterday, we received our first ski observation from Cooke City. Aside from finding a grizzly bear in the trees, a group of skiers found a settled base of 16-18 inches near Daisy Pass with wind loaded areas holding snow two to three feet deep. Currently, the mountains around Cooke City have received the most snow; the remainder of our advisory area has about 4-6 inches on the ground.

Although current snow amounts are too low to produce a widespread avalanche hazard, it is still possible for avalanches to occur in isolated areas. Wind loaded terrain such as the lee side of ridgelines or upper elevation gullies will be the most susceptible to avalanche activity. If you are caught in an avalanche this time of year, the biggest hazard involves being dragged over rocks or cliffs.

In October 2004, a small avalanche killed two climbers on the north face of [Sphinx Mountain \(video\)](#). That same year two other ice climbers had another close call in the same area ([photos](#)). Very thin snowpacks can still produce dangerous avalanches. Hunters need to be especially aware of early season avalanche conditions since they may be caught unaware, their minds far from thinking about avalanche hazard. There has already been one avalanche fatality in Canada, a grave reminder that avalanches can happen any time.

With more snow and wind forecasted this weekend the avalanche danger likely will rise. If you are heading into the backcountry, make sure everyone has functional rescue gear and knows how to use it. Now is the time to replace your transceiver batteries and test your equipment to make sure it still works. Keep this motto in your mind when traveling in the mountains - If there's enough snow to ride, there's enough snow to slide.

EDUCATION:

1. Check out our [Avalanche Safety Workshops](#) page for a listing of our longer courses.
2. Look at our [Education Calendar](#) for a full schedule of free one-hour lectures and avalanche classes offered by other providers.