GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Tue Jan 7, 2014

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Tuesday, January 7 at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Import Group** in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday was sunny and windy with speeds measuring 30-50 mph out of the west. They are much calmer this morning with ridgetop breezes at 10-25 mph out of the southwest. Temperatures are in the low 20s in the northern half of the advisory areas and near 10F around Cooke City and West Yellowstone. Today will be mostly cloudy and scattered showers will drop 1-2 inches of new snow overnight.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range   Gallatin Range   Madison Range   Lionhead area near West Yellowstone   Cooke City

I really want the avalanche danger to come down. I really do. But the snowpack is not cooperating. Avalanche activity and signs of instability cannot be ignored and the evidence feels a bit overwhelming. In the last three days:

- The Football Field on Saddle Peak avalanched from nearby avalanche control at Bridger Bowl. There are many photos posted and Mark made a **video** and dug a **snowpit**.
- Natural avalanches were seen in Hyalite Cirque.
- In Beehive Basin skiers remotely triggered a small avalanche and saw a natural avalanche.
- Near Bacon Rind in the southern Madison Range an MSU Graduate student found widespread instability during his research. 26 of his 28 Extended Column Tests propagated (**snowpit**). Skiers had collapsing and cracking on a poor snowpack north of there too (**snowpit**).
- Natural avalanches are still releasing around Cooke City (SE Republic Peak, Cache Creek, Amphitheater, Scotch Bonnet and Henderson).

Words are powerful, but photos are even better. Go look at our **photo collection** from the past three days and you'll start to understand the scope of the problem

Weak layers in the snowpack are unable to support all the fresh snow that's fallen last week (up to 2 inches of water weight), especially on slopes with wind-loading. Faceted, sugary, unbonded snow near the ground is collapsing and propagating fractures throughout our area. Around Cooke City the snow is deeper (5+ feet on the ground) and weak layers of facets are breaking mid-pack too. The exact location of the weak layer is irrelevant today. The past days activity is bulls-eye information that the snow is unstable and human triggered avalanches are likely. Throughout our advisory area the avalanche danger continues to be rated **CONSIDERABLE**.

EDITORIAL: SADDLE PEAK

I would love to know how many sets of tracks were wiped out in Sunday's avalanche of the Football Field on Saddle Peak. If you carved a set consider yourself lucky. I'm going to guess that not many snowpits were dug and that the only form of stability assessment folks leaned on were that others had skied it beforehand. This was not smart. The avalanche broke during early morning avalanche control on the boundary of Bridger Bowl. An explosive was placed in-bounds, but the avalanche ripped out-of-bounds. Why? Because the snowpack inside the

ski area was beaten into submission throughout the winter by the ski patrol while the Football Field was not. And we know that a skier hitting a weak, thin area can release the same avalanche. Once again luck plays a part in why skiers didn't Superman off the cliff in an avalanche and die. Saddle Peak is backcountry and deserves respect. Can you ski it sometimes? Sure. But where's your data showing it's a good idea?

I 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.

ANDROID APP

If you have an android phone or tablet, you can download our new free app. It's a slick way to get the advisory. Search Google Play for GNFAC. An iOS version is coming soon. Stay tuned.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AVALANCHE FATALITY

See photos, videos and read the full accident report **here**.

EVENTS/EDUCATION

Tonight, BILLINGS: 6:30-8:30 p.m. at High Mountain Recreation, **90-Minute Rescue Presentation.**

January 8, BOZEMAN: Wednesday, 6:30-8 p.m. at REI, **Sidecountry IS Backcountry** lecture.

January 9, BOZEMAN: Thursday, 6-7 p.m. at Mystery Ranch, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 9, HELENA: Thursday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Exploration Works, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 11, COOKE CITY: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., **Companion Rescue Clinic for Snowmobilers**, Pre-Registration is required. https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9445

January 11, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m. at Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 13, DILLON: Monday, 7-8 p.m., School of Outreach, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 15, BOZEMAN: Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MSU Procrastinator Theater, **Sidecountry IS Backcountry** lecture.

January 16, BOZEMAN: Thursday, 6-8 p.m., Beall Park, 1**-hour Avalanche Awareness and Transceiver Practice.**

January 18 & 19, BOZEMAN: Saturday, 12-4:30 p.m Bozeman Public Library; Sunday, all day in the field, **Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: https://www.ticketriver.com/event/8565-bozeman--snowmo-intro-to-avalanches-w-field

January 22,23 & 25, BOZEMAN: Wednesday and Thursday 7-9:30 p.m.; all day Saturday in field, **Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7113

January 22 & 23 &26, BILLINGS and COOKE CITY: Wednesday and Thursday 6-9 p.m.; all day Sunday in field, **Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9380

January 25, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m. at Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

More information our complete calendar of events can be found **HERE**.