

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Tue Jan 12, 2010

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Tuesday, January 12, at 7:30 a.m. **ProLite Gear**, in cooperation with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday was another day of sunny skies and above normal temperatures. Mountains warmed into the 30s with 10-20 mph southwest winds. Last night things only cooled to just below freezing in the northern ranges and 20's in the south. Sunny skies will prevail this morning, but clouds will increase this afternoon. Temperatures will mirror yesterday and winds will be out of the southwest at 15-25 mph. The mountains around Cooke City and West Yellowstone could see a trace to one inch of snow overnight.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Today is the sixth day in a row without snow. This quiet period gives the snowpack a rest and allows it to adjust to all the new snow from last week. Most avalanche activity usually occurs during and immediately after a storm. This avalanche cycle was no exception. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday slopes were triggered remotely from adjacent ridgelines and low angled slopes. Huge "whumphs" with cracks gunning across the slope made backcountry travel serious and exciting. Sunday, on Buck Ridge, I saw slides on small creek banks, rollovers and lower elevation hills that I've never seen before. One of our regular observers near Cooke City saw similar conditions and wrote last night, "Sure it's easy to avoid the obvious hazards of big lines/ faces, but it's these mid elevation rollovers and access routes... have the potential to gobble up unexpected travelers." My advice: Don't get gobbled up. And if you need some visual aids to help get the message across, check out all our recent [pictures](#) and [videos](#) on the web; it's a virtual Avalanche Channel.

The snowpack is definitely getting stronger as the days come and go without more snow. Slopes are no longer on a hair trigger, collapsing and cracking are becoming rarer, and natural avalanche activity isn't expected. It's clear that you can ride or ski on steeper slopes and get away with it. But I don't trust it. "Getting away with it" isn't part of a sound travel plan, so I'll be limiting my backcountry activity to lower angled slopes. There's a bit of wiggle room in the avalanche danger scale. Today, although it's getting harder to trigger avalanches, the possibility is still high on my radar. If folks get into avalanche terrain they'll probably trigger slides, so I'm continuing to rate the danger as **CONSIDERABLE**.

FUTURE CONCERNS

Feathery crystals of surface hoar ([photo](#)) are forming and blanketing many slopes in southwest Montana. Even with the warmer temperatures, the crystals seem to be surviving on many slopes. With today's increasing clouds and potential for snow in the next 48 hours, we may bury it. Once it's covered with new snow it may become a persistent weak layer that will create more avalanches as the season progresses.

I will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you get out in the backcountry give us a call or email with your observations. You can reach us at 587-6984 or email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com.

Ski Movies/Fundraiser

Hans Saari Memorial Fund presents the UP THERE Film Fest Thursday and Friday, January 14-15 at the Emerson Cultural Center - Two Films, including Mike Marolt's Skiing Everest and Swift, Silent, Deep, the Story of the Jackson Hole Air Force will be shown. For more info go to www.hansfund.org

Avalanche Education

Education Calendar

1. University of Montana/ Western - Birch Creek Center in Dillon MT

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Thursday, January 14th - 7pm to 8pm

2. University of Montana/ Western - Birch Creek Center in Dillon MT

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Friday, January 15th - 7pm to 8pm

3. Cooke City Fire Hall

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Saturday, January 16th - 6pm to 7pm

4. Bozeman

MMA Teen Avalanche Class: Lecture Thursday, January 21st & Field Session Saturday, January 23rd. To sign up or get more information, call Erin Taylor Montana Mountaineering Associations at 522-0659

5. Bridger Bowl

AAI Level 1 Avalanche Course - Friday, January 22nd to Sunday, January 24th

www.americanavalancheinstitute.com