

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Fri Mar 20, 2015

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Friday, March 20, at 7:30 a.m. **Grizzly Outfitters** in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center** sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning temperatures were only a few degrees below freezing. Skies were clear but warmer than yesterday morning and westerly ridgetop winds were blowing 15-30 mph. Today will have more sunshine and warm temperatures which should reach the mid-40s F. Winds should blow 10-25 mph generally from the W. A ridge of high pressure currently over the area should start to leave sometime Saturday and allow an unsettled weather pattern into next week.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range **Madison Range** **Gallatin Range**

Lionhead Area near West Yellowstone **Cooke City**

The snowpack is highly variable which means stability can be highly variable too. Every slope is a little different. Separate reports from Doug, Eric, and several groups of skiers show this variability.

1. Near Fairy Lake in the northern Bridger Range, a group of skiers found good snow and good stability that turned to hard ice in a N facing couloir. Then, they triggered a dry snow wind slab in a separate NE facing gully about 6-10 inches deep, 50 feet wide, and over 200 feet downhill. Watch this [video](#) of the avalanche being triggered.
2. Just north of Bridger Bowl near the ridge, Doug found a frozen snowpack on an E facing slope. On a SE facing slope he found a snowpack that was wet, weak and isothermal (32 degrees F throughout). He explains more in this [video](#).
3. Further south in Hyalite Canyon, Eric found 2-4 inches of new snow on top of a frozen snowpack. He had two concerns: wet point releases involving the new snow on south facing slopes and falling cornices. See his [video](#) with a massive piece of cornice ([photo](#)) that fell naturally. On N aspects he did not find wind slabs, just good, stable skiing.
4. Near Big Sky a skier reported good stability and dry snow on N aspects and horrible wet snow on S aspects by afternoon.

Dry snow on N facing slopes should be stable as long as you avoid fresh wind slabs. Frozen snow will be stable. Totally wet snow will be unstable ([photo](#)). The key to riding on south aspects is being on these slopes just as they start to warm and soften. Timing is crucial. With a light freeze overnight the transition from frozen to wet could happen quickly.

Today the avalanche danger will be **CONSIDERABLE** on slopes with any southerly exposure. North facing slopes will have a **MODERATE** danger.

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.
