

# **GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Wed Dec 17, 2014**

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, December 17 at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by [Lone Peak Brewery](#) and [Outlaw Partners](#). This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

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## Mountain Weather

Snow graced our entire area with 6-7 inches falling around Big Sky and 2-3 inches everywhere else. Under cloudy skies temperatures are in the teens and winds are west to southwest at 10-20 mph with gusts of 30 in Hyalite. Snow flurries will end this morning and skies will be mostly cloudy with mountain temperatures reaching the mid-20s. Tomorrow looks to be sunny and my fingers are crossed for more snow later this week.

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## Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#)

[Lionhead area near West Yellowstone](#) [Cooke City](#)

The snow that just fell is 5-7% density powder which will greatly improve the skiing and riding without adding a lot of weight to stress the weak layers. I toured up Mt. Blackmore in Hyalite yesterday while Mark was riding around Cooke City. We both found that the weak facets at the ground are still a problem in isolated locations, but they are not breaking in our stability tests ([snow profiles](#)). Conversely, in and around Beehive Basin skiers reported some collapsing and are still getting a few stability tests to propagate fractures, a sign of instability. Although the snow structure is similar in our advisory area, the snow depth and rate of strengthening is uneven.

Snowfall since this weekend fell onto a variety of surfaces, not all of them good. Some slopes were blanketed with small-grained facets or feathery surface hoar before the new snow fell making the new/old snow interface the most unstable part of the snowpack ([video](#)).

For today natural avalanche activity will be rare, and other signs of instability (collapsing and cracking) will only be sporadic, but the snowpack still demands a bit of investigation. Weak facets at the ground or under the new snow are the problem, especially if they are under a wind slab ([video](#), [photo](#)). For today the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** throughout southwest Montana since it is still possible to trigger slides. Be wary of wind-loaded slopes near the ridgelines where thin soft slabs may have formed.

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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](mailto:mtavalanche@gmail.com) or call us at 587-6984.

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## **AVALANCHE EDUCATION and EVENTS**

Take a look at our [Education Calendar](#) for all our classes being offered.

**TONIGHT: Avalanche Awareness and Beacon Practice, Wednesday, December 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Beall Park, Bozeman**

**Avalanche Awareness (1-hr) at the Yellowstone Association in Gardiner, Thursday, December 18, 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

**Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**

West Yellowstone: Dec 18 and 19, 2014: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/12955>

Five hours of lectures are followed by a full day field course. Topics covered include: avalanche terrain recognition, the affect weather has on avalanche hazard, the development of the mountain snowpack, decision making skills, and basic search and rescue procedures.

**Snowmobiler Rescue Course**, Cooke City, December 27, 0800-1200. Register here: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/13721>