

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Jan 9, 2014

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Thursday, January 9 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

Snow has been slowly trickling into the area and more should come over the next few days. It's currently snowing. As of 6 a.m. the mountains near Bozeman have received 1-3 inches of snow while the rest of the area has received about 6 inches of new snow. This morning temperatures were hovering near 20 degrees F. Winds increased and were blowing 10-20 mph gusting to 30 mph from the SSW. Today temperatures should slowly drop into the teens F. Winds should continue blowing 10-30 mph but shift to the W. An additional 3-5 inches should come today and snowfall should end early this evening.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Cooke City

Usually we start the advisory with the region with the most unstable snow. Instead let's talk about the Cooke City area where the snowpack is trending in a better direction. Doug and his partner are currently riding near Cooke City where the snowpack is about 5 feet deep and stronger than in other parts of the advisory area ([video](#)). So far, this area has received 25-50% more precipitation than other places. Early in the winter, this heavy snowfall caused a spike in avalanche activity on weak faceted snow near the ground but now this layer has gained strength on a lot of slopes. Can we still get avalanches? YES, absolutely ([photo](#)).

What does this mean? We can begin to trust the snowpack. With some work and an evaluation of the snow and the terrain, stable slopes can be found. For today overall the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE**. With more snow falling today, watch out for a rising danger with fresh wind slabs forming near ridge lines.

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

The snowpack in the rest of the advisory area is a completely different story. Weak faceted snow generally a foot above the ground persists on most slopes. This weak layer has had a chance to relax a little over the last few days because light, sporadic snowfall hasn't added much stress. Given the history of this layer, we still don't trust it and know it will produce more avalanches. In case you haven't been following conditions browse our [photo](#) and [video](#) collections.

Yesterday Karl Birkeland of the National Avalanche Center and I skied in the southern Madison Range near the Bacon Rind drainage hoping to conduct a little research. We needed stability tests to give us unstable results but they didn't. However we didn't ski a steep slope because, the snowpack has a slab resting on this weak layer of facets. This weak layer has been very active this season and was producing consistently unstable results in stability tests in the exact same area only two days prior.

The Bridger Range is a little unique in that it has been receiving a steady stream of snow. In the long run, we think this area will eventually have more stable conditions. Unfortunately weak facets near the ground haven't gone away yet and even produced a notable avalanche on Saddle Peak on Sunday ([photo](#), [video](#), [snowpit](#)).

For today we haven't gotten enough snow or wind to really reactivate facets near the ground and get widespread natural avalanche activity. However, new snow from yesterday and more coming today and this weekend will slowly increase stress on these weak facets and continue to make human triggered avalanches likely. For this reason, the avalanche danger today is rated **CONSIDERABLE**.

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.

MONTANA ALE WORKS FUNDRAISER DINNER

Montana Ale Works is hosting the 6th Annual Fundraiser Dinner for the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Chef Roth is creating an elegant, multiple course menu. His culinary creation will be paired with wines from the Ale Works cellar. Seating is limited to 40. Get your tickets early. <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9572>

EVENTS/EDUCATION

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

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

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](#).