

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Mon Jan 7, 2013

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Monday, January 7 at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by Alpine Orthopedics and 406 Brewery. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Over the past 24 hours 1-2 inches of snow has fallen over much of the forecast area except for the Bridger Range which squeezed out a trace. Currently, temperatures are in the teens F under mostly cloudy skies and winds are blowing 15-30 out of WNW. Today, temperatures will warm into the mid to upper 20s F and winds will remain out of the west blowing 15-30 mph. A stronger storm system is scheduled to arrive this afternoon bringing an increased chance of snow to the mountains. 2-4 inches is likely by tomorrow morning with the exception of the Bridger Range which will see 1-2 inches.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Madison Range Gallatin Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone Cooke City

Today, skiing or riding in avalanche terrain will be like approaching an unfamiliar dog - best bet is to assess the situation before getting up close and personal. Riding in avalanche terrain today will likely be uneventful - yet, there's always the possibility of a surprise bite.

In most cases, when you're surprised by avalanches, it means mistakes were made. Reducing the chance for surprises today will involve a quick but careful assessment of the snowpack. If the area you plan to ride feels slabby, punchy, hollow - or to sum it up 'variable' - you'll want to use extra caution when entering steeper slopes, especially those with high consequences. There may be a rogue wind slab resting over faceted snow, making human triggered avalanches possible ([photo](#)). The combination of a wind slab over facets produced a human triggered avalanche in the Hourglass chute north of Bridger Bowl on Thursday ([video](#), [video](#), [photo](#)).

If you find a slope where 3-5 inches of near surface facets and/or surface hoar is masquerading as powder, then you will likely enjoy a smooth and soft run avalanche free. I found soft riding near Hebgen Lake and in Bacond Rind on Saturday. Yesterday, skiers near Flathead Pass in the northern Bridger Range also found faceted snow on the surface and got ECT's to propagate about 30 cm's off the ground. Because deep weak layers are not widespread and it's been nearly two weeks since the last significant snowfall, triggering an avalanche on weak layers near the ground is unlikely.

Changing Conditions:

Southwest Montana will be in a fairly active weather pattern for the next 4-5 days. Although snow totals will be less than a foot, winds are forecasted to increase Tuesday through Thursday. With a widespread and well developed weak layer on the surface it will not take much snow and wind to increase the avalanche hazard (

[photo, video](#)). If you are heading into the backcountry pay close attention to changing conditions and never be afraid to alter the riding agenda.

Today, small avalanches are possible in isolated areas and the avalanche danger is rated [LOW](#).

Doug 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.

EDUCATION

Tuesday, January 8, 7:00 p.m., 1-hour Avalanche Awareness at Big Timber High School.

Wednesday, January 9, 6:30 p.m., 1-hour Avalanche Awareness at REI, Bozeman.

Thursday and Saturday, January 10 and 12, Rescue Clinic. Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at REI, Bozeman and Saturday at 10 a.m. in the field, location TBD. For more info and to register go <http://www.rei.com/event/47692/session/64126>

Saturday and Sunday, January 12 and 13, Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course in Bozeman. Currently we only have four people registered and need ten to run the course. We will cancel the course if 6 more do not register by the end of today. For more information and to sign up: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/4979-snowmobiler-introduction-to-avalanches-w-field>

Wednesday, January 16, 7:00 p.m. “The Sidecountry is Backcountry” at MSU’s Procrastinator Theater in Bozeman, a free 1-hour presentation.

Saturday, January 19, Rescue Clinic for Snowmobilers in Cooke City starting at Cooke City Motorsports. This 6 hour clinic teaches how to use avalanche rescue gear and perform an avalanche rescue. Registration is required. For more info and to sign up, visit: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/4980-companion-rescue-clinic-for-snowmobilers>

Saturday, January 19, 6 -7 p.m., 1-hour Avalanche Awareness Cooke City community center, Cooke City.