

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Sat Jan 25, 2014

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Saturday, January 25 at 7:30 a.m. **Cooke City Motorsports** and **Yamaha**, in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Today will be another beautiful day to be in the mountains. This morning temperatures were in the mid to upper 20s F near Bozeman and Big Sky where winds were blowing westerly 15-20 mph and gusting to 30 mph. Further south near West Yellowstone and Cooke City temperatures were in the teens and low 20s F with winds blowing 15 mph gusting to 20 mph. With an inversion in place this morning, valley temperatures were in the teens and single digits F. Today will be similar to yesterday with sunny skies, temperatures near freezing, and winds that shouldn't change.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Gallatin Range Madison Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

Recent warm and dry weather has given the snowpack a breather and avalanches have gotten harder to trigger. Unfortunately the structure and layering of the snowpack makes avalanches definitely possible. On most slopes, a dense slab of snow several feet thick rests on a layer of weak faceted snow found about a foot above the ground.

Yesterday my partner and I rode through the entire Lionhead area with a Gallatin Snow Ranger and found more avalanches than I've ever seen in this area. Most were human triggered and occurred last weekend and early this week. These slides were on all aspects and elevations because the faceted layer on which they broke exists everywhere. Triggering an avalanche now will be harder to do because this faceted layer has adjusted to the load of snow on top of it. There is still a good possibility of triggering a slide, and it's a matter of hitting a slope in just the right place. Doug's analogy for Cooke City is relevant for these areas as well (read about it [here](#)). Don't let your guard down even if you see tracks on a slope.

A similar snowpack and a similar situation exist in the entire Gallatin and Madison Ranges. Today the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE**.

Bridger Range

The Bridger Range has a similar layer of facets but this layer has gotten much stronger on most slopes. There was much less avalanche activity here during the last few weeks than in other ranges. Unfortunately this layer hasn't completely gone away and can be found in some places especially steep, rocky areas like one I checked out on Wednesday ([photo](#)). Eric and his partner ventured onto the west side of the range and were surprised by bonding within the faceted snow in this area ([video](#)). Another skier on the west side found a slope where the facets remain weak and turned around.

Overall, the snowpack in the Bridger Range has gradually gotten stronger but spatial variability means you can still get in trouble if you let your guard down. Today the danger on any slope steeper than 35 degrees or any

previously wind loaded slope is **MODERATE**. Slopes lacking a wind load and less than 35 degrees have a **LOW** danger.

Cooke City

The deepest and generally strongest snowpack exists near Cooke City where I'd feel the best about riding in avalanche terrain. We can still trigger avalanches and need to be prepared as a group was last Friday when they triggered a large slide, fully buried a rider, and saved his life (**accident report**). Be prepared like this group and practice with your rescue gear (see how in this **video**). Slopes with a relatively thinner snowpack are ones more likely to slide. Look closely at the avalanche in this **photo** and notice how the snowpack tapers to bare ground not far above the crown. Today the avalanche danger is **MODERATE** on all slopes steeper than 35 degrees and **LOW** on less steep slopes.

Eric 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.

TODAY: GVSA POKER RIDE on BUCK RIDGE

Today, the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association is having their annual Poker Ride on Buck Ridge. Dale Gullett will be teaching transceiver skills, so stop on by. Registration will be from 9 AM - noon at the Buck Ridge parking lot just south of the Corral Bar and Steakhouse on Highway 191 (5 miles South of Big Sky). Each hand costs \$5.00. The last draw will be held at the Corral at 4:00 PM. Chili and cornbread will be provided. If you have any questions, contact Wes at (406) 600-6063.

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.

EVENTS/EDUCATION

TODAY, January 25, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m. at Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 29, 30 & February 1, BOZEMAN : Wednesday and Thursday 7-9:30 p.m.; all day Saturday in field, **Advanced Avalanche Workshop with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: **<https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7114-asmsu-advanced-avlanche-workshop-w-field-course>**

January 31, February 1, BOZEMAN: Friday 6-8 p.m., Saturday 10-2 p.m; **Companion Rescue Clinic**. Pre-registration is required: **www.rei.com/stores/bozeman.html**

February 6, BOZEMAN: Thursday, 6-8 p.m., Beall Park; **Women's Specific Avalanche Awareness Class and Transceiver Practice**.

February 8, BUCK RIDGE: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., **Companion Rescue Clinic for Snowmobilers**, Pre-Registration is required. **<https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9446>**

February 8, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m., Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

February 12, BOZEMAN: Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MSU Procrastinator Theater, **Sidecountry IS Backcountry** lecture.

More information our complete calendar of events can be found [HERE](#).