

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Mon Feb 28, 2022

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Monday, February 28, at 7:00 a.m. This information is sponsored by [Alpine Orthopedics & Sports Medicine](#), [Stronghold Fabrication](#) and [Cooke City Motorsports](#). This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning, there is no new snow, temperatures are teens to low 30s F, and wind is southwest-west at 10-25 mph with gusts of 25-60 mph. Today, temperatures will reach high 20s to high 30s F with low 40s F in the Bridger Range. Wind will become stronger out of the west-southwest with average speeds of 15-30 mph and gusts of 30-50 mph. Skies will be mostly cloudy today with 1-3" of snow possible by mid-morning tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#) [Lionhead Range](#) [Island Park](#)

Recent strong wind out of the southwest-west drifted snow into 6-18" thick hard slabs on top of weak, sugary snow. These wind slabs are possible for a skier or rider to trigger today. Yesterday skiers in Hyalite and the southern Gallatin Range had shallow wind slabs crack wide under their skis ([photos and details](#)). On Saturday in the northern Bridgers three separate groups of skiers triggered slabs of wind-drifted snow 8-18" deep, some were hundreds of feet wide. One person was caught, but unharmed ([details and photos](#), [details and photos](#), [details and photos](#)). On Baldy Peak a skier triggered a similar hard slab, 6" deep and 100' wide ([photo](#)). These and other recent avalanches are evidence that an unstable snowpack can be found on wind-loaded slopes near Bozeman, Big Sky and West Yellowstone ([Mt. Blackmore photo](#), [Blaze Mtn. photo](#), [Tepee Basin photo](#)).

On wind-loaded slopes avalanches are possible and avalanche danger is [MODERATE](#). Without recent drifts of snow, avalanches are unlikely and danger is [LOW](#) on non-wind loaded slopes. Dave skied in Specimen Creek yesterday and found a weak snowpack that needed a slab on top to be unstable ([video](#)). Before riding on steep slopes carefully assess the potential for wind-loading and buried weak layers.



[Cooke City](#)

Yesterday my partners and I rode north of Cooke City and saw five recent skier and rider triggered slides. Most were small soft slabs ([photo and details](#), [photo](#)) and one hard slab broke more than 3 feet deep ([photo](#)). While touring up a slope we collapsed the snowpack and heard a "whumph" under our skis. We dug and found a layer of weak snow buried 8-10" deep which created the instability ([video](#)). This setup makes avalanches possible to trigger. These slides will probably be small, and are most hazardous if they push you into trees or off a cliff. Continued strong southwest-west wind today will grow larger slabs and add weight to deeper buried weak layers.

Triggering an avalanche on weak snow buried 2 feet deep is much less likely than it was a week ago, but the consequences of being caught are potentially deadly. Examples of this type of avalanche are two large

snowmobiler triggered avalanches last weekend, one of which was fatal ([Miller Mountain fatality video](#), [Mt. Abundance video](#), [details](#)). Before you travel on steep slopes, carefully assess the snowpack for potential instabilities and consider the consequences of being caught in a slide. Strong wind will drift snow today and make large avalanches possible. The avalanche danger is [MODERATE](#) on wind-loaded slopes. On non-wind loaded slopes avalanche danger is [LOW](#) because avalanches will be small or are unlikely, but not impossible.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can submit them via our [website](#), email (mtavalanche@gmail.com), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Upcoming Education Opportunities

See our [education calendar](#) for an up-to-date list of all local classes. Here are a few select upcoming events.

March 4, Companion Rescue Clinic with the Bozeman Splitfest. [Information and registration HERE.](#)

Every Saturday near Cooke City, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. FREE snowpack update and transceiver/rescue training. Stop by for 20 minutes or more at the Round Lake Warming Hut.