

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Thu Jan 27, 2011

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Thursday, January 27, at 7:30 a.m. Montana Import Group, in cooperation with the Friends of the Avalanche Center, sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

A ridge of high pressure is the main weather feature today. This morning temperatures were in the mid 20s F and ridgetop winds were blowing 20-40 mph from the W. Near Cooke City and West Yellowstone, winds were calmer with temperatures around 11 degrees F. Today winds should blow 15-30 mph from the W and temperatures will warm into the low 30s F. Near Cooke City and West Yellowstone temperatures will warm into the low 20s F. No new snow is expected for the next couple of days.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Bridger, Madison and Gallatin Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, and the mountains around Cooke City and the Washburn Range:

In most places the snowpack is strong and stability assessments are easy. If the snowpack has good stability on a small slope, then it should have good stability on a bigger adjacent slope; however, there are two issues to keep in mind. A slight weakness exist about 12-16 inches deep at an interface between old snow and newer snow. Yesterday in Middle Basin just north of Big Sky, my partner and I found this layer which Doug found in the northern Bridger Range and others found in isolated areas in the northern Gallatin Range. We found it on most aspects, but it seemed most reactive on slopes with some southern exposure. Solar radiation probably helped facet this layer the slightest amount but it wasn't obvious in a high powered hand lens. Another group of skiers in Middle Basin triggered a wind slab resting on this layer and the ski patrol at Big Sky noted shallow but touchy wind slabs on a similar layer. This issue shouldn't be a concern for very long.

The other issue to remember is any area with a thin snowpack (less than 3 or 4 feet). Yesterday as I hunted for a good location to dig a snowpit, I poked my ski pole into the snow and hit the ground. Before digging my snowpit, I knew that I'd find weak snow ([photo](#)). Skiers in Hyalite Canyon found a thin and weak snowpack on a W aspect. They retreated from that slope and found another with a snowpack over 6 ft deep that was the strongest snow they've seen all year. Watch for these specific terrain features where either the snowpack is thin or near-surface layers of snow fracture easily. Be careful, some of these thin areas are not obvious. Today, the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#) on all slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a [LOW](#) avalanche danger.

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.

This Friday: Beacon Park Opening Celebration

The Bozeman Recreation Department is celebrating the opening of the Bozeman Beacon Park on Friday, January 28th from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Beall Park, 415 N. Bozeman. The Recreation Department will offer food, refreshments, music, and training on how to use the park with your avalanche beacon. This event is free to the public. For information call 582-2290.

West Yellowstone: Beacon Park Operational

Skiing or riding near West Yellowstone? Test your beacon skills at a beacon park near the old airport where you can search for pre-placed beacons switched on/off by a control panel. Look for it by orange snow fence and signage just south of the snow cross track.

9th ANNUAL KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE

The 9th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge will be held at Bridger Bowl on Saturday, February 12. ALL proceeds go to the Friends of the Avalanche Center who use the money to promote avalanche education in southwest Montana. Last winter we taught 64 classes reaching over 4,900 people. You can help raise money to continue this education in 2 ways:

- 1). Get pledges and hike the ridge. You don't have to do 20 laps – you can get flat pledges and hike just once! Or you can test your mettle and try and break John Yarrington's record of 29 laps in 5 hours.
- 2). Sponsor someone. If you don't have someone to sponsor, consider sponsoring the GNFAC since we'll be hiking for dollars.

Go to http://bridgerbowl.com/events/view_event/81/ for more information and registration forms.

[Avalanche Education](#)

February 2, 3, and 5 in Bozeman

Advanced Avalanche Awareness –Wednesday & Thursday 7:00p.m. – 9:30 p.m. at MSU SUB Room 235 with a field day on Saturday at Bridger Bowl. ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED ([more information](#)) ([Register](#))