

Wind Drifts and Deep Snow in the Bridgers

Date

Sun, 01/19/2025 - 11:50

Activity

Skiing

Today, we braved the frigid temperatures and toured out of the Bradley's Meadow gate north of Bridger Bowl. Above Bradley's Meadow, we triggered a small [soft slab avalanche](#) on a south facing [aspect](#) around 7800'. This avalanche broke in a wind drift, 4" deep in low density new snow, likely on a [sun crust](#) or near-surface facets.

We toured up the Ramp and dug a [snowpit](#) on north facing [aspect](#) at 8200'. Here we found a strong, deep snowpack just over 5' deep. Under 4" of new snow, we found a decomposing melt-freeze crust with near-surface facets, and underneath, a mostly right-side-up snowpack structure. The facets near the bottom of the snowpack have gained strength and were hard and rounding. We did not get unstable results in our pit tests here.

Additionally, during steady snowfall from late December through early January, in the Bridger Range and mountains near Bozeman we saw minimal (if any) avalanches break on weak snow near the bottom of the snowpack. This minimal activity combined with what we have been seeing in snowpits indicates deeper avalanches are unlikely.

Cracking within shallow wind slabs was the only sign on instability we saw today. We chose to ski 30-35° terrain, assessing for and steering clear of wind drifted snow as we made our way down.

Light snow fell all day (S1) and winds were calm on the ridge. There was also evidence of the strong winds earlier in the week in the form of large drifts in unusual locations across lower elevations. These drifts are worth being cautious of, though they are now stubborn to unreactive and being disguised by the new snow.

Region

Bridger Range

Location (from list)

The Ramp

Observer Name

H Darby