

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Dec 14, 2014

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Sunday, December 14 at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by [Cooke City Motorsports & Yamaha](#) in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning Snotel sites and Bridger Bowl weather stations were down so I do not have accurate snow totals for much of our advisory area. With that said, it appears (through various webcams) that most areas received 2-3 inches of high density snow. At 4 a.m. temperatures are in the teens F and winds are blowing 10-20 mph out of the west with gusts reaching close to 30 mph in the mountains around Cooke City. Today, light snow will continue through the morning hours with an additional 1-2 inches possible. Snow will taper off by this afternoon and skies will become partly to mostly cloudy. Temperatures will warm into the 20s F and winds will continue to blow 10-20 mph out of the west. A weak ridge of high pressure will gradually build over the area producing dry conditions through tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#) [Lionhead area near West Yellowstone](#) [Cooke City](#)

Last night at the Bozeman Ice Festival I was mesmerized by incredible athletes pulling acrobatic moves on plywood and plastic. When out of nowhere, I found myself more mesmerized by a white substance falling from the sky. Yes, it was actually snow! It has been so long I almost forgot what falling snow looked like.

For what it's worth, this fresh coat will help general riding conditions without rapidly increasing the avalanche danger. On most slopes, facets near the ground have gained strength and should be able to handle this recent load. But, as demonstrated by a recent avalanche in Cooke City ([photo](#)), some slopes have a structure willing and able to produce avalanches ([video](#), [video](#)).

Slopes that have received a recent wind load will be the most suspect. Although winds have not been overly strong, fresh wind slabs will likely exist on upper elevation slopes leeward to west winds. These slabs will be relatively small in size, but could carry a skier or rider into unfriendly terrain. Fresh wind-blown snow will also add stress to weak facets near the ground. Avoiding steep, rocky, upper elevation terrain will be the best way to avoid triggering a slide on this layer.

Today, the excitement will be high and skiers and riders will be eager to push it in avalanche terrain. Although this storm wasn't huge, it was big enough to notch up the avalanche danger. Now is no time to let your guard down. Pay close attention to your surroundings and always be thinking about the consequences of an avalanche.

Today, human triggered avalanches are possible and the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE**. If snow and wind continue through the morning hours, the avalanche danger could rise to **CONSIDERABLE** on steep, wind loaded slopes.

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.

Have a Smartphone or Tablet? The Friends of the Avalanche Center just published two FREE apps so you can get the latest avalanche information, videos and photos: [iOS 8 GNFAC App](#); [Android app](#)

AVALANCHE EDUCATION and EVENTS

Take a look at our [Education Calendar](#) for all our classes being offered.

Fundraiser at Katabatic Brewing, Tuesday, December 16, 4-8 p.m., Livingston

Avalanche Awareness and Beacon Practice, Wednesday, December 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Beall Park, Bozeman

Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course

West Yellowstone: Dec 18 and 19, 2014: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/12955>

Five hours of lectures are followed by a full day field course. Topics covered include: avalanche terrain recognition, the affect weather has on avalanche hazard, the development of the mountain snowpack, decision making skills, and basic search and rescue procedures.