

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 2, 2013

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 2 at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by Mystery Ranch in partnership with the Friends of the Avalanche Center. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning I'm reporting no snow, clear skies, light winds and mountain temperatures in the single digits. High pressure will keep skies sunny. Today's temperatures will warm into the low 20s and winds will remain light out of the northwest at 10-15 mph. Tonight will be cold with single digit temperatures, but over the next few days a general warming trend is predicted under mostly sunny skies.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Madison Range Gallatin Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone Cooke City

Our snowpack is generally stable. It's becoming increasingly rare to find weak layers of facets near the bottom of the snowpack breaking in our stability tests. Natural and human triggered slides are also rare, which, given the high volume of traffic in the backcountry last week, is a positive sign.

Generally safe avalanche conditions prevail, but as a student of the snow I know that small avalanches are still possible ([photo](#)). Snowpacks less than three feet deep have the weakest snow. Without new snow or a wind-load these slopes are mostly fine, but a quick snowpit and stability test will take the guesswork out of decision-making. The top 6-12 inches of our snowpack is getting weaker by the day. Cold clear nights and warmer, sunny days create faceted, weaker, unbonded snow through a process called near-surface faceting ([article](#)). The snow is not static, and unfortunately today's sunny weather creates tomorrow's weak layer. In isolated areas wind has blown thin slabs on top of these facets and it's not out of the question to trigger a small avalanche, which a skier reported doing on [Saddle Peak](#) yesterday.

Without new snow or widespread wind-loading, the snowpack is not under any stress and is enjoying a breather after the holidays, just like the rest of us. For today, throughout our entire forecast area, the avalanche danger is rated [LOW](#) on all slopes.

From the Sierras: Watch and Learn

<http://unofficialnetworks.com/skier-buried-avalanche-tahoe-video-rescue-114323/>

When five backcountry skiers share just two beacons and shovels, this is what you end up with. Not exactly a crack team of rescuers.

Mark 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.

EDUCATION

Thursday, January 3, 6:00 p.m., Eric Knoff presents a 1-hour Avalanche Awareness lecture at 406 Brewing Company, Bozeman.

Tuesday, January 8, 7:00 p.m., 1-hour Avalanche Awareness at Big Timber High School.

Wednesday, January 9, 6:30 p.m., 1-hour Avalanche Awareness at REI, Bozeman.

Thursday and Saturday, January 10 and 12, Rescue Clinic. Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at REI, Bozeman and Saturday at 10 a.m. in the field, location TBD. For more info and to register go

<http://www.rei.com/event/47692/session/64126>

Saturday and Sunday, January 12 and 13, Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course. For more information and to sign up: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/4979-snowmobiler-introduction-to-avalanches-w-field>