GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Dec 27, 2023

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Wednesday, December 27th at 6:30 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Werner Wealth Management (Advisors with DA Davidson)**, **Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association** and **Beartooth Powder Guides**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

At 5 a.m. under clear skies, there's no new snow to report. Mountain temperatures are 15-20 F and ridgetop wind is west to north at 10-20 mph with gusts of 30 mph. Today will be sunny with temperatures reaching the high 20s F as wind turns southwest at 10-20 mph. Our next potential snowfall is not until the middle of next week.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

Signs of instability are sprinkled around our forecast area. Yesterday a skier got collapsing and cracking on the **Beehive/Bear Basin** divide. On Christmas day a skier triggered large **collapse at Lionhead**, the day after Alex and I found instability in our snowpits (**video**) and Dave triggered a small wind-load in the Bridger Range (**video**). These red flags warn us that not all slopes are stable. We have many layers of weak snow (surface hoar, facets, depth hoar), yet the exact type doesn't matter. Big Sky Snow Safety succinctly wrote, "...every interface is characterized by weakness."

All slopes have weak snow, yet only some are unstable, which presents a conundrum. We must determine which is dangerous and which is not. Slopes under 30 degrees steepness are generally safe because they are not avalanche terrain. If you are looking to play on steeper slopes, dig and test layers or be content rolling the dice. A clean break in a column test indicates unstable conditions.

Triggering an avalanche 1-2 feet deep is possible, especially on slopes with a cap of dense wind slab. Without a whumpf or cracking, the avalanche risk is not obvious and you will have to put your shovel in the snow to assess stability.

For today, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE on all slopes in our forecast area.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.

We offer *Avalanche Fundamentals with Field Session* courses targeted towards non-motorized travelers in **January** and one geared towards **motorized users**. Sign up early before they fill up.

King & Queen 2024, 3 February 2024. Form a team or sign up individually to hike laps on the Bridger Bowl ridge to fundraise for the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Loss in the Outdoors is a support group for those affected by loss and grief related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.