GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Jan 28, 2024

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, January 28th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Alpine Orthopedics & Sports Medicine**, **Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club** and **BWAGs**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning there is no new snow. Temperatures are high 20s to low 30s F. Wind is westerly at 5-20 mph with gusts of 20-40 mph. Today will be mostly cloudy in the southern ranges to mostly sunny near Bozeman. Temperatures will reach mid-30s F most places and 40 F in the Bridger Range. Wind will be west-northwest at 15-30 mph. A few snowflakes could fall near West Yellowstone, Island Park and Cooke City, but no measurable accumulation is expected.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

On many steep slopes the added weight of a person will easily trigger an avalanche. Sugary facets and surface hoar make up the bottom of the snowpack, and these weak layers can barely support overlying slabs of snow that accumulated through January. Over the last week, no snow fell in the Bridger Range and a few inches accumulated elsewhere. Despite minimal recent loading, the very weak snowpack is slow to stabilize and human triggered avalanches are likely.

A long list of avalanche activity over the past three weeks shows examples of the potentially deadly slides that remain likely, and why we are hesitant to trust steep slopes (**avalanche activity**). This list includes, but is not limited to:

- A couple slides triggered by skiers on Saddle Peak last week (**photos**, **photos**).
- Large natural avalanches near Cooke City (**photos**).
- Large slides on Buck Ridge near Big Sky (**photo**).
- Multiple avalanches triggered remotely (**Cooke City 1**, **Cooke City 2**, **Cooke City 3**, **Buck Ridge avalanche**).
- Near Lionhead on Friday we saw dozens of avalanches that occurred on all aspects and elevations at various times over the last week, some as recent as Thursday (**photos and observation**, **video**).

Careful route selection is essential. Be cautious of travel near and underneath steep slopes, especially those that were previously wind-loaded (**Bridgers video**). Find terrain that is less than 30 degrees steep and not directly below or connected to anything steeper (**video about terrain assessment**). Human triggered avalanches are likely and the avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE.

Today's above freezing temperatures could bring a threat of wet snow avalanches, mainly near Bozeman and Big Sky on slopes receiving direct sunshine. Wet avalanches should be minimal today, and might become more of a concern later in the week. A sticky snow surface or rollerballs on steep slopes are the first sign of decreasing wet snow stability.

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.

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE, FEBRUARY 3rd

Do you like to hike? Do you like to ski? Then the King & Queen of the Ridge is for you. Hike, ski and raise money for the Friends of the Avalanche Center in their 2nd biggest fundraiser of the year. Join the effort to promote and support avalanche safety and awareness! Fundraising prizes for the top 5 individuals who raise over $500. *No racing is necessary to compete for the fundraising prizes*. Info is **HERE**. Race participants for the February 4th event must register separately with Bridger Bowl **HERE**.