

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Thu Jan 21, 2010

Good Morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Thursday, January 21, at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Ale Works**, in cooperation with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday the southern Madison Range and the mountains near West Yellowstone received an inch of snow, and today along with Cooke City they will get an additional 1-3 inches. All other areas remained dry and might see a trace of snow today. This morning temperatures were in the mid to low teens F with winds blowing from the south and southwest at 5-10 mph in Bridger Range and 10-15 mph with gusts in the 20s everywhere else. Expect winds to remain the same for most of today with a slight increase late this morning. Temperatures will rise into the mid 20s F.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Madison Range, the southern Gallatin Range, and the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone:

Weak faceted snow continues to plague the snowpack in mountains near Big Sky and West Yellowstone. This faceted snow has not gained any strength and continues to produce avalanches. Recent warm weather has only helped the overlying slab become more cohesive and supportable. Yesterday Doug and I skied near West Yellowstone where we botched the approach and skinned up the wrong ridge. Fortunately this kept us off an established skin track. We hiked through untouched snow where we experienced widespread collapsing and cracking, sure signs of instability. Another skier in the Bacon Rind area of the southern Madison Range found very similar conditions and stayed on low angle slopes. Our [snowpit](#) and [his](#) were also very similar with big facets underneath a slab capped by a little bit of powder. We posted videos recently from [Big Sky](#) and [Lionhead](#) worth viewing.

With a persistent weak layer, recent avalanches and widespread instability, today the avalanche danger is rated [**CONSIDERABLE**](#) on all slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a [**MODERATE**](#) avalanche danger.

The Bridger and northern Gallatin Ranges, the mountains around Cooke City and the Washburn Range:

In the Bridger and northern Gallatin Ranges and the mountains near Cooke City, the snowpack looks somewhat better only because it looks so bad in other areas. In many other seasons this snowpack would be the worst in the advisory area, but this year it is the best. An observer near Cooke City found signs of improvement but continues to see weak faceted snow in many locations similar to what Gallatin Snow Rangers have found ([photo](#)). Another observer in the Hyalite area found several natural avalanches, one on a northerly aspect and one on a southerly aspect, but also found a 35 degree slope with poor skiing but good stability.

Today, reasonably stable slopes can be found but remain suspicious because human triggered avalanches are possible and the avalanche danger is rated [**MODERATE**](#).

I will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you get out in the backcountry give us a call or email with your observations. You can reach us at 587-6984 or email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com.

Avalanche Education

Education Calendar

1. Bozeman

MMA Teen Avalanche Class: Lecture Thursday, January 21st & Field Session Saturday, January 23rd. More info: <http://www.montanamountaineering.org/TeenAvalancheCourse.shtml>

2. Bridger Bowl

AAI Level 1 Avalanche Course - Friday, January 22nd to Sunday, January 24th

www.americanavalancheinstitute.com

3. Four Corners Groomer Shack

RESCUE LECTURE: Tuesday, January 26th 7pm. The Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association is having it annual Chili Feed at 6:30pm in the Groomer Shack at 4 corners.

4. Billings

Avalanche Awareness and Rescue Class-Wednesday, January 27th, 6-9 pm at Beartooth Harley.

5. Big Sky

Moonlight Basin Avalanche Course: Join Moonlight Basin for a comprehensive, two-day and one evening avalanche awareness class. Thursday, Jan 28th 5-9:30pm and Friday and Saturday, Jan 29&30 8am-4pm. Contact: events@moonlightbasin.com or 406-993-6026

6. Bozeman

BASIC AVALANCHE WORKSHOP: The Friends of the Avalanche Center and ASMSU Outdoor Rec are offering a Basic Avalanche Awareness Class the evenings Wed, Thur, 27 & 28 January with a field day on Saturday, 30 January. \$25 donation. No sign up required. <http://www.mtavalanche.com/education/classes/basic>

7. West Yellowstone, Holiday Inn

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Saturday, January 30th - 7pm to 8pm