

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Feb 12, 2014

AVALANCHE WARNING

ISSUED ON February 12 2014 AT 1:00 pm

The Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center is issuing a **Backcountry Avalanche Warning for the mountains around Cooke City**. Heavy snowfall and strong winds have created highly unstable conditions. Natural and human triggered avalanches are likely. **The avalanche danger is rated HIGH in the mountains around Cooke City**. Very dangerous avalanche conditions exist. Travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended and avalanche runout zones should be avoided.

This warning will either be terminated or updated by 6:30 AM on Thursday, February 13.

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, February 12 at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Import Group** in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

In the last 24 hours one to two inches fell in most mountain areas. The exceptions were Cooke City with over three inches and the Bridger Range with only a trace. Winds are westerly in the Bridger Range, but south to southwest everywhere else. Currently speeds are averaging 20-40 mph with gusts hitting 50-60 mph. Temperatures are in the high teens and will not warm much today. Snowfall throughout the day will measure 2-4 inches by tomorrow morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Cooke City

Cooke City is a world of its own. Although the SNOTEL site is showing .8" of SWE for the last three days, Mark is there and verified much more has fallen. He reported high rates of snowfall yesterday with two feet of new at upper elevations, accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Basically, it was raging out. Mark and his partner were able to remotely trigger a slide on a slope entering Sheep Creek ([photo](#)) on their sleds. The avalanche danger has spiked and today will be dangerous. For example, Mark said that anyone riding into Sheep Creek will trigger avalanches "for sure", possibly remotely from the bottom of the slope, which is a scary and usually unsurvivable event. I expect this same instability to abound throughout the area. For today, the avalanche danger is rated HIGH on any wind-loaded slope or on any slope steeper than 35 degrees. Slopes less steep will have a CONSIDERABLE danger.

Madison Range Southern Gallatin Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

In the mountains from Big Sky to West Yellowstone, strong winds and a couple inches of fresh snow will keep the avalanche danger elevated on steep and also wind-loaded terrain. A layer of facets buried 18-24 inches from

the surface has been avalanching with human triggers, sometimes from 30-75 feet away. Triggering avalanches remotely is a bad sign. I was able to avalanche a small rollover remotely in Lionhead on Monday ([photo](#)); skiers did the same near Big Sky and also in Beaver Creek. [Yesterday's advisory](#) listed nine avalanches in three days. For today the avalanche danger is rated [CONSIDERABLE](#) on any wind-loaded slope or on any slope steeper than 35 degrees. Slopes less steep have a [MODERATE](#) danger.

Bridger Range Northern Gallatin Range

The Bridger and northern Gallatin Ranges have strong winds which are loading slopes and adversely affecting the stability ([photo](#)). The layer of facets buried 1 ½-2 feet under the surface has an isolated distribution and is a bit stronger compared with other mountain ranges. In recent days Eric and other skiers found this to be true on Mt Ellis; and Eric found similarly good stability on non-wind-loaded slopes up Flanders drainage in Hyalite ([photo](#)). On Sunday on Mount Blackmore, skiers were able to get cracking, collapsing and even trigger a small slide on slopes that had both wind-loading and buried facets. For today the avalanche danger is rated [CONSIDERABLE](#) on all wind-loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a [MODERATE](#) danger.

US: Six Avalanche Fatalities since Saturday

From the [CAIC website](#): Avalanches have killed six people in the [western US](#) since February 8. Avalanches killed two people in Utah on 2/8 and 2/9. Two [separate accidents](#) killed two people in Colorado on 2/10. Two people were killed in a single accident on 2/11 in Oregon.

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.

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE

Saturday, February 15th is the **12th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge** Hike/Ski-a-thon fundraiser to support avalanche education in southwest Montana. Collect pledges for one, two or the most ridge hikes you can do in the five hours of competition. 100% of the proceeds go to the Friends of Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. Kids and families are encouraged to hike too! Hike as an Individual or Team. [Make a Pledge](#). [Sign Up](#). [More Info](#).

EVENTS/EDUCATION

TONIGHT, BOZEMAN: Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MSU Procrastinator Theater, **Sidecountry IS Backcountry** lecture.

February 20, BOZEMAN: Thursday, 6:30-8:00 p.m., REI, **Women's Specific Avalanche Awareness** lecture. Pre-registration is required: www.rei.com/stores/bozeman.html

February 22, BIG SKY: Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Beehive Basin Trailhead, **Companion Rescue Clinic**. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. <https://ticketriver.com/event/9964>

February 22, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7:00-8:00 p.m., Holiday Inn, **1 –hour Avalanche Awareness for Snowmobilers** lecture.

More information our complete calendar of events can be found [HERE](#).