

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 3, 2018

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 3rd, 2018 at 6:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by [**Stronghold Fabrication**](#) and [**Highline Partners**](#). This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Avalanche Fatality

Yesterday there was a snowmobiler avalanche fatality in Cabin Creek on the west side of Sage Peak in the southern Madison Range. Six riders from MN assessed that slopes were dangerous and opted not to highmark, deciding instead to ride the lower flanks. One rider triggered the slope from below and was caught and buried 3' deep under his sled. The ski to his sled was sticking out of the snow and his location was confirmed by a beacon search. He was dug up in 12-15 minutes but did not survive. This is a sad and tragic accident and all our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends.

Avalanche Accidents

1. **Bridger Range**: Yesterday, two skiers underneath the cliffs of Saddle Peak were caught and partially buried by an avalanche from a small, wind-loaded pocket that was triggered from above ([**photo1**](#), [**photo2**](#)). The two skiers were uninjured.
2. **Bridger Range**: The accident report on the avalanche in Truman Gulch that injured a skier on Friday, December 29 can be found [**HERE**](#).
3. **Cooke City**: On Friday, December 29, two skiers triggered an avalanche on a ridge to the northeast of Baronette Peak. It broke 2-3 feet deep catching them both and partially burying one ([**photo1**](#), [**photo2**](#)).
4. **Cooke City**: Two skiers remotely triggered an avalanche in Sheep Creek on December 28, partially burying one to the neck.

*Check it out: 15 pictures have been added to our [**Photos page**](#) since Monday morning documenting many avalanches.*

Mountain Weather

Under increasing clouds, mountain temperatures are in the 20s with southwest to northwest winds blowing 10-25 mph. Today will remain cloudy, but clear tonight as temperatures fall into the teens with westerly winds at 10-20 mph. Snow flurries this afternoon may drop a trace to 1" of new snow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City

Let us recap: The mountains got 2-4' of snow by Saturday evening resulting in many natural and human triggered avalanches. On Saturday we issued an Avalanche Warning and there was a High danger in all ranges. Avalanches were failing on weak, faceted snow either on the Thanksgiving crust or under the storm snow buried 2-4' deep. Many slides occurred on lower elevation slopes that have a shallow, weak snowpack. Since Saturday, the weather improved, visibility has been perfect, the snow is deep and everyone hit slopes with abandon, some

losing their minds in the process and many getting extremely lucky.

The snowpack is stabilizing quickly, but not on all slopes, and not equally. You have to assess each slope individually, which means digging and doing a stability test in the absence of collapsing or cracking. Eric was in Cooke City yesterday and saw more avalanche crowns in one day than ever before. His [video](#) at the crown of an avalanche explains what happened and why stability is improving. Yesterday my partner and I skied above Hebgen Lake and got large collapses on my way up, but none up high in the big starting zones, and my stability tests were on the poor side ([video](#)).

Today, I do not expect to see natural avalanches, but human triggered ones are possible and the danger is rated **MODERATE**, a “spicy” moderate is what I called it in yesterday’s video. Spicy because although the likelihood of triggering an avalanche fits a moderate rating, I’m being conservative and traveling as though it’s rated considerable.

If you get out and have any avalanche or snowpack observations to share, drop a line via our [website](#), email (mtavalanche@gmail.com), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

[Events and Education Calendar](#)

BOZEMAN

TONIGHT, Jan. 3, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. at REI Bozeman

Jan. 12 and 13, **Companion Rescue Clinic**, [Info and Register](#)

Jan. 17, 18 and 20 or 21, **Introduction to Avalanches w/ Field Day**, [Info and Register Here](#)

Jan. 24, 25 and 27, **Advanced Avalanche Workshop w. Field Day**, [Info and Register Here](#)

Feb. 9 and 10, **Companion Rescue Clinic**, [Info and Register](#)

WEST YELLOWSTONE

Jan. 6, **Avalanche Awareness**, 7-8 p.m. at West Yellowstone Holiday Inn Conference Center

BIG TIMBER

Jan. 11, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. at Sweet Grass County High School

BUTTE

Jan. 13, **Rescue Clinic**, 10 a.m. at Homestake Lodge

Dillon

Jan. 16, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6:30-8 p.m. at U.M. Western Library

COOKE CITY

Every Friday and Saturday, **Current Conditions Update and Avalanche Rescue**, Friday 6:30-7:30 p.m. at The Antler's Lodge in January. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Lulu Pass road.