

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Sun Jan 31, 2010

Good Morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Sunday, January 31, at 7:30 a.m. **On Site Management**, in cooperation with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

A ridge of high pressure has dominated our weather pattern over the past 24 hours bringing us sunny skies and calm conditions. This ridge will break down today as a weak low pressure system pushes in from southern Idaho.

Winds are currently calm out of the W-SW at 5-15 mph, but will increase as the day progresses to 15-25 mph along the ridgetops. Temperatures will remain mild today with highs in the upper 20's to low 30's F, but will cool off this evening with lows in the teens. The impact of this system will be felt more in the southern mountains which could pick up 6-8 inches of snow by tomorrow morning with the northern ranges picking up less than half that amount.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

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

No new snow has fallen over our forecast area for the past four days which has helped slow avalanche activity. It has been three days since the last report of a human triggered avalanche in the Madison Range, but now is no time to let your guard down. Three human triggered avalanches were reported last week and unstable conditions continue to persist throughout the Madison Range and Lionhead area. The largest of the three slides was triggered on Wednesday near Hebgen Lake. This avalanche was substantial in size and was triggered on a 30 degree slope that propagated a fracture uphill to a 35 degree slope and broke on facets near the ground. Although buried facets continue to be the main avalanche producer in the Madison Range, other hazards such as areas of buried surface hoar and upper elevation wind slabs hold the possibility of producing an avalanche with the right trigger.

With more snow and wind forecasted over the next 24-36 hours we can expect to see a spike in avalanche activity. Due to the unstable and unpredictable nature of the snowpack a **CONSIDERABLE** avalanche danger exists on all slopes steeper than 35 degrees. A **MODERATE** danger exists on all slopes less than 35 degrees.

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

A healthier snowpack structure and more stable conditions exist in the mountains around Bozeman and Cooke City. This may seem like an improvement over the Madison Range, but the fact is weak snow and pockets of instability continue to produce avalanches. On Thursday a snowmobiler triggered an avalanche just north of Ross Peak near the Flatirons. This slide broke up to 3 ft deep on buried facets near the ground and was easily large enough to bury a person. Although these buried facets are not performing quite as enthusiastically as they are in the Madison range and Lionhead area, as long as they exist in the snowpack there is the chance of triggering an avalanche. This type of unpredictable snowpack demands careful stability evaluations, cautious route finding and conservative decision making.

Today, human triggered avalanches remain 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 let us know what you find. You can reach us at 587-6984 or email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com.

Monday, February 8: MONTANA ALE WORKS BENEFIT DINNER

Mark your calendars: Montana Ale Works is hosting a benefit dinner for the Friends of the Avalanche Center on Monday evening, February 8th. Chef Roth Jordan has assembled an amazing five course menu themed "Mountains of the World" with foods from Chile, Montana, France, New Zealand and Germany. Dinner is limited to 40 seats with the first course served at 6:30 p.m. Tickets to this event are \$75, all inclusive, and available at Montana Ale Works. More information is available on our [calendar](#) or by calling 587-7700.

8th ANNUAL KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE

The 8th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge will be held at Bridger Bowl on Saturday, February 13th. ALL proceeds go to the Friends of the Avalanche Center who use the money to promote avalanche education in southwest Montana. Last winter we taught 62 classes reaching over 4,300 people. You can help raise money to continue this education in 2 ways:

- 1). Get pledges and hike the ridge. You don't have to do 20 laps - you can get flat pledges and hike just once! Or you can test your mettle and try and break John Yarrington's record of 27 laps in 5 hours.
- 2). Sponsor someone. If you don't have someone to sponsor, consider sponsoring Mark, Eric or myself since we'll be hiking for dollars.

You can go to http://www.bridgerbowl.com/events/view_event/15/ for more information and registration forms.

[AVALANCHE EDUCATION CALENDAR](#)

1. Bozeman

Advanced Avalanche Workshop: The Friends of the Avalanche Center and ASMSU Outdoor Recreation are offering an Advanced Avalanche Workshop on the evenings of February 3 & 4 with a field day on Saturday, February 6. ADVANCED REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. For more information or to register contact: friendsofgnfac@gmail.com