

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Oct 18, 2012

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the season's first weather and snowpack information bulletin issued on Thursday, October 18, 2012. Once snow starts to accumulate we will post more frequent updates. Here is some information to help you get ready for the upcoming season, and don't forget, the 14th Annual [PowderBlast](#) is next Friday, October 26th.

Mountain Weather

I looked at long range weather models and found that southwest Montana is predicted to have an average to slightly below average snowfall. The good news is that average sounds down right enjoyable after last year. More good news is that sometimes the long range models are wrong. Sure, they can be wrong in the drier-than-expected way, but being an optimist I prefer to think they'll be wrong in the "holy cow, not another foot of new powder" way. You can look at the models here and form your own biased conclusions:

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=4

Weather Stations:

The weather stations at [Taylor Fork](#) ([video](#)) and Lionhead in the southern Madison Range are both up and running. The station up Flanders Peak in Hyalite will be put up next, followed by the one at LuLu Pass outside Cooke City. The [NRCS SNOTEL](#) sites operate 24/7 and are a great spot to get a first look at where the snow is falling.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

On the snowpack front, there's not a whole lot to report...yet. Around Bozeman and Big Sky, shaded, north facing, high elevation slopes are still holding snow that fell during the beginning of October ([video](#)). These few inches of snow have changed to sugary facets. Buried facets, even thin layers, are prone to avalanche once they get buried.

HUNTERS: Be wary of crossing steep, snow covered slopes while hunting. I recommend carrying an inclinometer to help identify avalanche terrain (slopes steeper than 30 degrees) so you can avoid them.

ICE CLIMBERS: An avalanche on a small slope can be deadly if it sweeps you off a cliff. Two ice climbers died on the north face of [Sphinx Mountain](#) in 2004 when a small, shallow slide pushed them off a large cliff.

SKIERS and BOARDERS: If there's enough snow to ride, there's enough snow to slide. Although there may not be enough snow to be buried, avalanches injure folks every fall by beating them up on rocks.

Education:

1. Check out our [Avalanche Safety Workshops](#) page for a listing of our longer courses.
2. Look at our [Education Calendar](#) for a full schedule of free one-hour lectures and avalanche classes offered by other providers.
3. Take a class with your regular backcountry partner; your life may depend on it.