GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Jan 6, 2023

Good morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Friday, January 6th at 7:00 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Blitz Motorsports and Yamaha** and **Grizzly Outfitters**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Accident Report From Dec 31, 2022 Avalanche Fatality

Our full report of the fatal avalanche near Cooke City last weekend is available here: https://www.mtavalanche.com/accident/22/12/31

Mountain Weather

This morning, there are 6” of new snow in the Bridger Range and 2-4” across the rest of the advisory area. Winds are 10-15 mph out of the southwest and west with gusts of 15-30 mph. Temperatures are in the 20s F. High temperatures will be in the high 20s and low 30s F. Light to moderate west winds will continue. Snow showers today will not amount to significant accumulations.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range

6 inches of dense new snow with gusty west winds drifting it into thicker slabs make for dangerous avalanche conditions. Plan to avoid wind drifts. Be on the lookout for bulbous pillows of snow below ridgelines or on the side of cross-loaded gullies. Cracks shooting out in front of your skis or sled are a clear sign that you’ve found the unstable snow and should immediately retreat to lower angled slopes. These wind drifts may be sitting on top of freshly buried surface hoar, a weak layer which will make them avalanche more easily, break wider, and be more likely to break above you (**photo**).

This load of new snow also makes slides breaking deeper in the snowpack more likely. You may not get any feedback from the more deeply buried weak layers until it is too late. Tone down your terrain choices, because if one of these slides breaks, it will be large and likely not survivable (**Saddle Peak video**). The avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE today on wind loaded slopes in the Bridger Range and MODERATE on all other slopes.

Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City Island Park

Elsewhere throughout the advisory area we have weak layers buried in the snowpack with a few inches of new snow on top. Small slides in the new snow are possible, especially in wind drifts, but slides breaking deep are the major concern. Last weekend, when these weak layers were last loaded there were both natural and human triggered avalanches (**video and details of fatal avalanche in Cooke**). Several of these slides broke on the sides of steep gullies above terrain traps, good motivation to give these small slopes plenty of respect (**details**, **details**, **video**). Many of these avalanches were triggered from thinner areas on a slope. Similar avalanches are possible today.

Mitigate these lurking instabilities by looking for signs of instability (recent avalanches, cracking, collapsing, poor test scores) and avoiding steep slopes if you find them. Only expose one person at a time to steep slopes, watch your partner from a safe spot, and make sure everyone is carrying avalanche rescue gear (beacon, shovel, probe).

For today, since avalanches are possible, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE in the Madison and Gallatin Ranges, Lionhead area, and mountains around Cooke City.

Please share avalanche, snowpack or weather observations via our **website**, email (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

Tuesday, January 10th, 6PM, Women's Specific Avalanche Awareness + Beacon Practice at Story Mill Park in Bozeman. Free.

Thursday, Jan 12th, 6:30 PM, 1hr avalanche awareness for mechanized users at BSCO BASE in Big Sky. Free.

Every Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. ***Avalanche Rescue Training***, drop in for any amount of time. Round Lake Warming Hut, Cooke City. Free.

Loss in the Outdoors, is a support group for those who have been affected by grief and loss related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.