

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Sun Jan 11, 2015

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Sunday, January 11, at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by [**Soda Butte Lodge in Cooke City**](#) and [**Lone Peak Brewery**](#). This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Since midnight the Bridger Range has picked up three inches of new snow. The rest of the advisory area has picked up a trace to one inch. At 4 a.m. mountain temperatures are in the 20s F and winds are blowing 10-20 mph out of the W-NW with ridgetop gusts reaching close to 30 mph. Today, light snow will continue with an additional 2-4 inches likely in the Bridgers and 1-3 inches elsewhere. Temperatures will warm into the upper 20s to low 30s F and winds will remain light to moderate out of the W-NW. Snow will taper off this evening and temperatures will drop into the teens F.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#) [Lionhead area](#)
[near West Yellowstone](#) [Cooke City](#)

There's just something not right about driving in January with your windshield wipers on. But that's exactly what happened at 4 a.m. this morning when I drove into town. Another round of wet snow and freezing rain is gracing the valley while dense snow accumulates in the mountains.

For better or for worse, this latest round of snow isn't enough to steadily increase the avalanche danger. However, if snow continues to accumulate throughout the day, it could become enough weight/stress to put the snowpack on edge. Fortunately this weak storm system has arrived with very little wind which will keep the formation of fresh wind slabs to a minimum.

Today, the main avalanche concern is buried persistent weak layers which can be found mid-pack or near the ground. In areas like the west side of the Bridger Range or the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, weak snow near the ground is the most problematic layer ([photo](#), [video](#)). In other areas, a layer of small grained facets or surface hoar can be found 1-2 feet below the surface. This layer produced a few small human triggered avalanches last week around Cooke City. Two separate groups of skiers also got this layer to propagate in stability tests in the northern Gallatin Range yesterday.

During variable conditions such as these, stability assessment can be tricky. Digging a quick snowpit ([where](#)) and performing an Extended Column Test ([how](#)) is a fast and easy way to minimize snowpack uncertainty. This process should only take 5-10 minutes and could be the difference between making the right or wrong decision.

Today - Heightened avalanche conditions exist and the avalanche danger is rated [**MODERATE**](#).

I 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.

AVALANCHE EDUCATION and EVENTS

Take a look at our [Education Calendar](#) for all our classes being offered.

1-hour Avalanche Awareness, Three Forks, 7 p.m., Monday, January 12, Methodist Church Annex.

Women's Avalanche Awareness w/ Beacon Practice, Bozeman, 6:30- 8 p.m., Tuesday, January 13, Beal Park.

1-hour Avalanche Awareness, 4 Corners, 7 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, GVSA Groomer Shed.

1- hour Sidecountry Avalanche Awareness, Bozeman, 6:30-8 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, REI.

Companion Rescue Clinic, Cooke City, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Sunday, January 18. More details and registration: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/13990>

Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course, MSU Bozeman, evening lectures 7-9:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, January 21 and 22, with an all-day field session on Saturday or Sunday (your choice). Get more information and register here: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/13090>

Advanced Avalanche Workshop with Field Course, MSU Bozeman, evening lectures 7-9:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, January 28 and 29, with an all-day field session on Saturday. Get more information and register here: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/12445>

The **Friends of the Avalanche Center** and **Montana Ale Works** are hosting an *Avalanche Forecaster's Beer Social Fundraiser* the evening of January 27th. Get more information and buy tickets here: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/14010>