GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Jan 14, 2024

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, January 14th at 7:00 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association**, **Chad Bunting-Financial Advisor-Edward Jones** and **Yellowstone Ski Tours**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Temperatures have skyrocketed to single digits above and below zero F. Wind has been out of the southwest and northwest at 5-15 mph with gusts of 20-35 mph. There is no new snow. Today temperatures will reach single digits above zero F in most places and struggle to break zero F in the Bridger Range. Wind will be west-northwest at 5-15 mph with gusts to 20 mph. There is a chance for 1-2” of snow overnight.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Madison Range Southern Gallatin Lionhead Range Cooke City Island Park

The snowpack is unstable and human-triggered avalanches are likely. Over the last week winds drifted new snow into cohesive slabs on top of a very weak snowpack (**snowpack photo**, **photo**, **video of weak layers**).

There were natural avalanches mid-week near Cooke City (**photos**, **photos**) and Big Sky (**photos**), and over the last few days skiers and riders triggered avalanches (**avalanche activity list**). Many recent avalanches were triggered remotely, from a distance, meaning you could trigger a slope from lower angle terrain adjacent to or below steeper slopes (**Taylor Fork video**, **Lionhead video**, **Cooke City photos**).

A break from snowfall and wind-loading is allowing snow stability to slowly improve, but the very weak snowpack means it remains easy to trigger a large avalanche. With persistent weak layers, as stability slowly improves snowpack evaluation becomes tricky. Snowpack tests may give false-stable results and a slope might allow multiple tracks before it breaks. Any slope has potential to slide if it has a cohesive, supportable slab sitting on top of weak, sugary snow.

Careful snowpack evaluation and cautious route finding are required. Be extra cautious of travel on or below slopes steeper than 30 degrees, especially previously wind-loaded slopes. Avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE.

Bridger Range Northern Gallatin

Recent snow has drifted into slabs on top of a very weak snowpack (**Bridger Range video**). Avalanches are possible to trigger, especially on wind-loaded slopes. Watch and feel for signs of wind drifting, such as cracking across the snow surface, cornices, or smooth rounded pillows of snow. Avoid steep slopes that have these signs. The weak snowpack can also cause facet sluffs that gouge deep into the snowpack and run long distances (**Buck Ridge video**). Be cautious of long, sustained steep slopes where these may occur, especially if there are

consequences like rocks, trees or cliffs. Carefully evaluate the snowpack and consequences of an avalanche before traveling on or below steep slopes. Avalanches are possible to trigger and the avalanche danger is MODERATE.

The cold temperatures create higher consequences of an accident. Any bad situation can quickly become worse.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

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

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.

We offer *Avalanche Fundamentals with Field Session* courses targeted towards non-motorized travelers in **January** and one geared towards **motorized users**. Sign up early before they fill up.

January 16, at 4 p.m., **Darren Johnson Avalanche Education Memorial Fund - Movie Night**, The Waypoint, Big Sky. Information **HERE**.

January 18, 4 p.m., **Darren Johnson Avalanche Education Memorial Fund - Pint Night**, Beehive Basin Brewery, Big Sky. Information **HERE**.

King & Queen 2024, 3 February 2024. Form a team or sign up individually to hike laps on the Bridger Bowl ridge to fundraise for the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

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

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE, FEBRUARY 3rd

Do you like to hike? Do you like to ski? Then the King & Queen of the Ridge is for you. Hike, ski and raise money for the Friends of the Avalanche Center in their 2nd biggest fundraiser of the year. Join the effort to promote and support avalanche safety and awareness! Fundraising prizes for the top 5 individuals who raise over $500. *No racing is necessary to compete for the fundraising prizes*. Info is **HERE**. Race participants for the February 4th event must register separately with Bridger Bowl **HERE**.