

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Tue Jan 19, 2010

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Tuesday, January 19, at 7:30 a.m. **Northern Lights Trading Company**, 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 moist southwest flow clouded up our skies and dropped an inch of snow in the southern Madison Range last night. This morning, winds are 10-20 mph out of the south-southwest with mountain temperatures in the mid 20s. Clouds will continue today and winds will decrease tonight. In the next 24 hours weak dynamics will only wring 1-2 inches of snow in the southern mountains.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

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

Thirteen days have passed since the last significant snowfall yet we continue to get reports of instability. Avalanche activity for this length of time is rare and a strong reminder of just how weak and unstable our snowpack really is. On Friday in the northern Madison Range, skiers triggered some avalanches in the backcountry on Lone Peak. On Saturday, the third skier in a group of four triggered a slide in Bear Basin ([photo](#)), while further south on Buck Ridge a snowmobiler also triggered a slide ([photos](#)). In the last two days we've had even more reports of instability in this area.

In the southern Gallatin Range on Friday, skiers toured into Big Horn Peak and heard a symphony of "whumphs" throughout the day. The snow was so weak they had difficulty isolating a column since it kept tipping over. Similar conditions were reported in the last three days in Bacon Rind and Beaver Creek too. Yesterday, Eric and I rode into Lionhead and could only see a few debris piles in the soupy fog. One of the slopes was triggered on Saturday by riders that took out older tracks I saw the previous Monday. Luckily he was not caught, but it scared him enough that he drug himself and his riding partners to our avalanche class that night. Better late than never.

Given all this prolonged avalanche activity and signs of instability, you'll probably trigger a slide on steep slopes today. Consequently, a **CONSIDERABLE** avalanche danger exists on all slopes greater than 35 degrees steepness. All other slopes have a **MODERATE** avalanche danger, but it's a pretty serious **MODERATE**.

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

It's a whole different world in the Bridger and northern Gallatin Ranges. These mountains are getting skied and snowmobiled with very few reports of instability. Folks skied steep slopes on Bridger Peak yesterday after evaluating the slope. As time passes it's becoming harder to trigger avalanches. Although signs are pointing to continued strengthening, the snowpack still demands respect since sugary facets are underlying stiffer slabs. A similar snowpack structure exists in the mountains around Cooke City. The snowpack here is deeper yet also showing a positive trend toward stability. Even with this positive news, we need to keep on our toes since avalanches are still possible. For today, 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 give us a call or email with your observations. You can reach us at 587-6984 or email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com.

Education Calendar

1. Bozeman

MMA Teen Avalanche Class: Lecture Thursday, January 21st & Field Session Saturday, January 23rd. More info: <http://www.montanamountaineering.org/TeenAvalancheCourse.shtml>

2. Bridger Bowl

AAI Level 1 Avalanche Course - Friday, January 22nd to Sunday, January 24th

www.americanavalancheinstitute.com

3. Four Corners Groomer Shack

RESCUE LECTURE: Tuesday, January 26th 7pm. The Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association is having it annual Chili Feed at 6:30pm in the Groomer Shack at 4 corners.

4. Billings

Avalanche Awareness and Rescue Class-Wednesday, January 27th, 6-9 pm at Beartooth Harley.

5. Big Sky

Moonlight Basin Avalanche Course: Join Moonlight Basin for a comprehensive, two-day and one evening avalanche awareness class. Thursday, Jan 28th 5-9:30pm and Friday and Saturday, Jan 29&30 8am-4pm. Contact: events@moonlightbasin.com or 406-993-6026

6. Bozeman

BASIC AVALANCHE WORKSHOP: The Friends of the Avalanche Center and ASMSU Outdoor Rec are offering a Basic Avalanche Awareness Class the evenings Wed, Thur, 27 & 28 January with a field day on Saturday, 30 January. \$25 donation. No sign up required. <http://www.mtavalanche.com/education/classes/basic>

7. West Yellowstone, Holiday Inn

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Saturday, January 30th - 7pm to 8pm