

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Nov 22, 2012

Gobble, gobble. This is Doug Chabot with early season snowpack information issued on Thanksgiving Day at 7:30 a.m. Today's information is sponsored by Grizzly Outfitters in partnership with the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Please remember that uphill traffic is not allowed at Big Sky or Moonlight Basin ski areas. It is permitted at Bridger Bowl, but backcountry conditions exist within the ski area boundaries. This information will be updated as conditions change.

Mountain Weather

Today is a day of thanks, and right this moment I'm thankful that it finally got cold and snowed. I know that's pretty shallow, especially compared with family, health and life, but it's a thanks nonetheless. The Bridger Range fared the best with seven inches of new snow. The northern Gallatin and Madison Ranges and mountains around Cooke City received 4-6 inches while the West Yellowstone area got 2-3 inches. Temperatures dropped into the low teens this morning with westerly winds blowing 20 mph with gusts to 40. Clear skies are expected through Friday as mountain temperatures reach into the high 30s and winds remain out of the west at 20-30 mph. Another system on Saturday night and Sunday should bring additional snow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Carve some turns, carve some turkey.

The new snow came in moist and is measuring at least 10% density. It was also windy during the storm and continues to blow strong at the ridgelines. I have one main avalanche concern: wind slabs. Wind-loaded slopes near the ridgelines are where a person could trigger an avalanche. Since winds are expected to keep loading these slopes in the next few days, this localized danger will remain.

In general, there are no widespread instabilities in the snowpack. Unseasonably warm weather has helped consolidate and strengthen the early season snows, which we are pleased to see ([video](#), [photo](#)). Furthermore, Moonlight Basin Snow Safety dug snowpits and found mostly strong snow ([snow profile](#)). Throughout southwest Montana, on slopes with enough snow to ski, folks are finding similar conditions.

In essence, we are off to a good start with our snowpack, but for the next few days steer clear of wind-loaded slopes. Given the new snow, sunny weather and holiday crowds itching to burn off some mashed potato and gravy calories, it's possible someone will get unlucky and trigger an avalanche. Don't let it be you.

Public Service Announcement: Put fresh alkaline batteries in your beacon; not lithium, nor rechargeable. Rechargeable batteries are too unreliable and lithium ones die very suddenly making it hard to tell when to replace them, until it's too late.

Once we get more snow we will begin issuing daily advisories and avalanche danger ratings. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations to share, drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

EDUCATION

Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course at MSU in the evenings of November 28 and 29 with an all-day field session on December 1. Sign up for this class [HERE](#).

Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course in Billings at Hi-Tech Motor Sports on December 12 and 13, 6-9 p.m. and the field course on January 20 in Cooke City. Sign up for this class [HERE](#)

Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course in West Yellowstone on December 20 and 21. Sign up for this class [HERE](#).

FREE 1 hour lectures:

December 3, Northern Lights Trading Company, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

December 8, Greenup Performance in Black Eagle near Great Falls, MT, 7 p.m.

December 12, REI in Bozeman, 6:30 p.m.