

# GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 17, 2018

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. Today's advisory is dedicated to **Travis Engstrom**. Travis was killed in an avalanche outside of Cooke City on this day nine years ago. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

## Mountain Weather

Under clear skies mountain temperatures are near 20F with westerly winds averaging 10-15 mph and gusting to 25 mph. The Bridger ridge is windier, blowing west at 25-35 mph. Under sunny skies temperatures will rise to the low 30s before clouding up later this afternoon with increasing west winds. No snow is expected tonight and our next storm is Thursday evening

## Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



### Lionhead Range

The Lionhead area has weak and unstable snow near the ground ([video](#)) that will take a long time to strengthen. One week ago we issued an avalanche warning for the area and on most days we received reports of avalanches or collapsing/cracking. Snowmobilers triggered slides on Sunday, one in Airplane Bowl, a popular spot on the east side of Lionhead Ridge ([photo](#)), and another lower down in the trees ([photo](#)). It has been 4 days without new snow and the likelihood of triggering slides is decreasing, but the snow is still dangerous. For today, human triggered avalanches are likely and the avalanche danger is rated **CONSIDERABLE**.



### Cooke City

Separate parties skiing west of Cooke City each got large collapses yesterday, possibly on the Thanksgiving crust buried 4+' deep. One of them saw an avalanche that likely released during the day ([photo](#)). Words like "tricky", "untrustworthy", and "wary", are being used to describe the conditions. In some instances there are no immediate signs of instability on the approach or in a pit, yet an avalanche occurs nearby or the slope collapses with a heart-stopping "whumph". The snowpack isn't overly poor, nor is it really good, it's in-between; some slopes are stable, but a few are not ([photo](#)). There are only a couple tried-and-true methods to keep us safe, the easiest one is to avoid steep slopes. The second is to dig and test multiple times if we think the slope is stable. The goal is to find unstable snow *before* we commit to a slope. For today, the avalanche danger is **MODERATE** since it remains possible to trigger avalanches.



### Bridger Range   Gallatin Range   Madison Range

The snowpack is adjusting to last week's 2-4 feet of new snow. Signs of instability, like collapsing and cracking are decreasing and test scores in snowpits are climbing higher. Slopes with a thin snowpack (less than 3' deep) will be the most unstable (Dudley Creek [photo](#)) along with slopes near ridgelines that have an extra burden from wind-loading ([photo](#)). There also may be a lingering instability at the new/old snow interface plus weak, faceted snow mid-pack, which Alex describes in his [video](#) from Sunday. In general, the snowpack is getting stronger and the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE**.

If you get out and have any avalanche or snowpack observations to share, drop a line via our [website](#), email ([mtavalanche@gmail.com](mailto:mtavalanche@gmail.com)), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram ([#gnfacobs](#)).

## **Report: Reas Peak Avalanche Fatality**

Our report from the snowmobiler avalanche fatality on January 10 is [HERE](#). A snowmobiler was caught, fully buried and killed in Idaho near Reas Peak in the Centennial Range.

## **King and Queen of the Ridge**

[King and Queen of the Ridge](#), Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Hike and Ski/Ride-a-Thon fundraising event to support the Friends of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. Sign up and start collecting pledges [HERE](#).

## **Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events**

### **Events and Education Calendar**

#### **BOZEMAN**

Jan. 17, 18 and 20 or 21, **Introduction to Avalanches w/ Field Day**, [Info and Register Here](#)

Jan. 22, **MAP Brewing Pint Night**, 4-8 p.m. MAP donates 50 cents of every pint sold to the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Jan. 24, 25 and 27, **Advanced Avalanche Workshop w. Field Day**, [Info and Register Here](#)

Feb. 9 and 10, **Companion Rescue Clinic**, [Info and Register](#)

#### **WEST YELLOWSTONE**

Jan. 20, **Avalanche Awareness**, 7-8 p.m. at West Yellowstone Holiday Inn Conference Center

#### **COOKE CITY**

Every Friday and Saturday, **Current Conditions Update and Avalanche Rescue**, Friday 6:30-7:30 p.m. at The Antler's Lodge in January. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.