

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Jan 17, 2019

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast issued on Thursday, January 17th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by [World Boards](#) and [Spark R&D](#). This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

At 5 a.m. the southern mountains and Lionhead area have 1-2" of new snow and Cooke City has 3". Temperatures are near 20F and winds are southwest at 10-20 mph with gusts of 35 mph. Today will be cloudy with scattered snowfall, temperatures in the upper 20s and similar winds. By morning, 4-6" will fall in the southern mountains, including Cooke City, and 2-4" everywhere else.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



Southern Madison Southern Gallatin Lionhead Range

The mountains south of Big Sky to West Yellowstone have received 2-4" of snow in the last 36 hours. The snowpack here is weak and consists mostly of sugary facets. You do not need to dig a snowpit to find them, just step off your skis or sled and you'll sink knee deep to the ground in them. On slopes where this layer is capped by a slab of cohesive snow, avalanches are still possible. In Taylor Fork, both skiers ([photo](#), [details](#)) and sledgers ([photo](#), [details](#)) triggered 2-3 foot deep avalanches on Sunday and Monday when wind slabs broke on these facets. I visited on Tuesday and found this same poor snow structure in my snowpits ([video](#)).

The new snow may not have added much weight to the snowpack, but it did bury a new weak layer of surface hoar. In Teepee Basin sledgers found these feathery crystals on many slopes ([photo](#)). In Taylor Fork the winds scoured high elevation slopes ([photo](#)), but I'm sure the surface hoar survived in some areas. We'll be looking for it and tracking its locations since it may become a problem. For today, the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#).



Bridger Range Northern Gallatin Northern Madison Cooke City

The northern mountains and Cooke City area have slopes that are weak, but stable. Snowpacks less than 3 feet deep consist of weak facets, as Eric found north of Big Sky on Saturday ([video](#)) and Ian and Alex saw on Buck Ridge on Friday ([photo](#), [video](#)). Yet overall, it is difficult to trigger avalanches and these mountains are *mostly stable*. Until we get a substantial amount of new snow, triggering slides is unlikely. The words "*mostly stable*" are a qualifier since there is still lingering potential to trigger an avalanche. Skiers in Hyalite got a wind slab to break clean in a stability test and another group found a small wind slab had cracked. These signs of instability are isolated and small, similar to an avalanche a person may trigger. These conditions remind me of accidents when climbers or skiers have been swept off their feet by tiny slides ([Beehive Peak, 2015](#)).

Eric toured into Frazier Basin in the northern Bridger Range yesterday and found stable snow and wind stripped terrain ([photo](#), [video](#)). He also cautioned us to be on the lookout for instability. For today, avalanches are

unlikely, but not impossible, and the danger is rated [LOW](#).

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



Island Park

Avalanche Warning

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: [Events and Education Calendar](#).

BOZEMAN

January 23, 24 and 26, **Advanced Avalanche Workshop w/ Field Day**, [Info and Register Here](#).

February 2, **King and Queen of the Ridge** at Bridger Bowl (fundraiser). [Register with Bridger](#) to hike in the event, and [create a pledge page](#) to raise funds with your Ridge laps.

BIG SKY

January 22, **Pint Night at Beehive Brewery**, 4-8 p.m. A fundraiser for the [Darren Johnson Avalanche Education Memorial Fund](#).

WEST YELLOWSTONE

January 26, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness for Snowmobilers**, 7-8 p.m. Holiday Inn West Yellowstone.

DILLON

January 22, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6:30-7:30 p.m. U.M. Western Library.

BILLINGS

January 22, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. The Base Camp, Billings.

COOKE CITY

Every Friday and Saturday, **Rescue Training and Snowpack Update**. Friday 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Soda Butte Lodge. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.