

A Simple Equation in the Taylor Fork

Date

Tue, 03/05/2024 - 13:55

Activity

Snowmobiling

We rode into the Taylor Fork past Consolation Hill and to the weather station at Sunlight Basin. Winds were strong through the morning and we rode in a ground blizzard in all the open meadows along the trail in. There was not much for obvious drifting on the road, but the snow was obviously going somewhere. Snowfall intensity varied from a trace to an inch per hour (S -1 to S2). The highest precipitation intensities occurred around 1-1:30 PM as we began our ride out.

We did limp our way to the Sunlight Basin pit site in poor visibility and dug, but the wind, snow and light were such that we couldn't even visualize the bowl near the weather station. Digging a pit, we found more of the same structure that we have tracked for a few months now. The [depth hoar](#) does not seem to have gained any measurable strength, but the layers of [surface hoar](#) are somewhat more decomposed. We got an ECTP 23 on a layer of facet in the mid-snowpack and an ECTP27 on the [depth hoar](#).

As we discussed in our video for the day, today and tomorrow the equation is simple... new and wind-drifted snow on a weak snowpack equals dangerous conditions. As we move into a period of high pressure for the rest of the week, the likelihood of triggering an avalanche will decrease as will signs of instability and, most likely, the frequency of avalanches. However, the consequences of getting caught will remain unchanged. As folks are enticed by steeper terrain later in the week, we strongly recommend an incremental approach to expanding terrain selection and avoiding slopes with terrain traps. Additionally, safe travel practices become essential if you are stepping into the ring, especially carrying rescue equipment, knowing how to use it, and traveling one at a time on any slope steeper than 30 degrees.

Region

Southern Madison

Location (from list)

Taylor Fork

Observer Name

David Zinn