

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Feb 14, 2013

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Thursday, February 14 at 7:30 a.m. **On Site Management** and **Alpine Orthopedics** sponsor today's advisory which is dedicated to the memory of **Caleb Acker** who died in an avalanche two years ago today. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Since yesterday the mountains near Cooke City received 5 inches of snow and all other places received 1-3 inches. This morning temperatures were in the low teens F, and gusty winds were blowing 15 mph from the W and NW with gusts of 20-30 mph. Mostly cloudy skies today will keep temperatures in the teens F, and winds will continue blowing 15-30 mph from the W and NW. Snowfall tonight will bring 1-3 inches by tomorrow morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Madison Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#)

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

Recent winds and light snowfall have combined to form fresh wind slabs. Ski patrols haven't triggered many wind slabs but have triggered enough to warn us to watch for them in the backcountry.

Another problem is weak faceted crystals buried 1.5 to 2.5 feet deep. In some places this layer exists near the ground ([photo](#)), while in other places it exists in the middle of the snowpack ([photo](#)). Recent avalanches occurred on these facets on Alex Lowe Peak in Hyalite Canyon, in Beehive Basin, and on Lionhead. Also a [small piece of slab](#) broke on these facets on Mt Ellis in the northern Gallatin Range yesterday. The good news is that these facets are generally very easy to feel with you shovel as you dig a snowpit and easy to see in the snowpit wall ([photo](#)). The bad news is that it's hard to predict the presence of this layer based on aspect and elevation. Digging a snowpit in a few different places is best to determine if it exists.

Today, fresh wind slabs will be easy to trigger on wind loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees where the avalanche danger is rated [CONSIDERABLE](#). With a buried layer of facets that has produced recent avalanches, it is definitely possible to trigger an avalanche on all other slopes where the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#).

Cooke City

The mountains near Cooke City have also received new snow and wind. Fresh wind slabs likely exists near ridgetops. Fortunately this area lacks buried layers of facets on many slopes. Isolated slopes with a thinner snowpack and ones at lower elevations are good places to find these facets. For today, with some fresh wind slabs and buried facets in specific places, human triggered avalanches are possible and the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#).

I will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

Avalanche on Alex Lowe Peak in Hyalite – See a [video](#) and several [photos](#) and a [snowpit](#) from this accident. An accident report is posted [here](#).

February 16: 11th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge

The **Avalanche Center**, **Montana Ale Works** and **Beartooth Powder Guides** have already entered as teams. Organize your own team or come out as an individual hiker. Better yet, let others do the hiking for you and [donate](#) instead! If you would like to donate to the Avalanche Center team of Mark and Eric (30 lap goal!) drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com. Pledges can be made per lap or just a flat donation. Kids and families are encouraged to hike too! Prizes will be awarded to the most hikes (1st, 2nd, and 3rd); most money raised; most laps for a team; most money raised for a team. [More Information](#) / [Registration Form](#)

AVALANCHE EDUCATION

Cooke City: This Friday, a free 1-hour *Avalanche Awareness* lecture at the Community Center, 6 p.m.

West Yellowstone: This Friday, a free 1-hour *Avalanche Awareness* lecture at the Holiday Inn, 7 p.m.