GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 10, 2024

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Wednesday, January 10th at 6:45 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Yellowstone Club Community Foundation** and **Montana State Parks.** This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

AVALANCHE WARNING

We are issuing a backcountry avalanche warning for the southern Gallatin and southern Madison Ranges, the mountains around Cooke City, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, and the Centennial Mountains outside Island Park. The snowpack is weak and unstable and the recent snowfall and strong wind are creating very dangerous avalanche conditions. The danger is rated **HIGH** on all slopes. Human-triggered and natural avalanches are likely. Backcountry travelers should stay away from all steep slopes. Avalanches can be triggered from flat terrain. Steep slopes can avalanche far above and run into lower-angled terrain.

This warning will expire or be updated by 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 11, 2024.

Mountain Weather

In the last 24 hours, the mountains around Bozeman received 2” of snow, Big Sky received 4”, and in Cooke City, Lionhead and the Centennials, 6” fell. Wind has been strong out of the west to northwest with averages of 15-30 mph and gusts of 50 mph. Snow will continue today and tonight with 3-5” expected by tomorrow morning. Wind will decrease substantially to 10-20 mph by this afternoon. Temperatures are in the single digits F and will rise into the teens before dropping near zero tonight.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Southern Madison | Southern Gallatin | Lionhead Range | Cooke City | Island Park

Avalanche Warning

The avalanche danger is HIGH in the southern mountains and an Avalanche Warning has been issued. Since Friday these mountains have gotten a little bit of snow each day totaling 12-18” (1” SWE). Wind in the last 36 hours has blown at all elevations further loading slopes. The snowpack is historically weak which is outlined in this **video compilation**. Yesterday I was in Lionhead and found very poor stability in our snowpit at 8,000’, widespread cracking and collapsing at 8,300’ feet, and we intentionally triggered a 1,000’ wide avalanche at 8,600’ (**video**, **pics and observation**). Our advice is simple: Do not go into or underneath avalanche terrain. Avalanches can be triggered from far away and they will be large and deadly.

Bridger Range | Northern Gallatin | Northern Madison

The mountains around Bozeman and Big Sky have a couple feet of weak, faceted snow that is capped by 4-6” that fell since Saturday night (.4-.6” SWE). Strong and gusty wind has swirled and loaded slopes at all elevations. The interface between recent snow and older snow is unstable. Typically, 6” of snow over 4 days is nothing to worry about, but these are not typical times. My uncertainty regarding stability is high and I am worried. Given the wind and new snow, triggering avalanches is likely, especially slopes with a wind drift. Notch your travel plans back and be extra cautious and vigilant. Cracking, collapsing and avalanche activity are obvious signs to stay away from steep slopes. Today is not a day to push your luck. If you need evidence of the instability, check out our **field videos** and **observations page**.

The avalanche danger is rated CONSIDERABLE.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.

We offer *Avalanche Fundamentals with Field Session* courses targeted towards non-motorized travelers in **January** and one geared towards **motorized users**. Sign up early before they fill up.

January 16, at 4 p.m., **Darren Johnson Avalanche Education Memorial Fund - Movie Night**, The Waypoint, Big Sky. Information **HERE**.

January 18, 4 p.m., **Darren Johnson Avalanche Education Memorial Fund - Pint Night**, Beehive Basin Brewery, Big Sky. Information **HERE**.

King & Queen 2024, 3 February 2024. Form a team or sign up individually to hike laps on the Bridger Bowl ridge to fundraise for the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Loss in the Outdoors is a support group for those affected by loss and grief related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE, FEBRUARY 3rd

Do you like to hike? Do you like to ski? Then the King & Queen of the Ridge is for you. Hike, ski and raise money for the Friends of the Avalanche Center in their 2nd biggest fundraiser of the year. Join the effort to promote and support avalanche safety and awareness! Fundraising prizes for the top 5 individuals who raise over $500. *No racing is necessary to compete for the fundraising prizes*. Info is **HERE**. Race participants for the February 4th event must register separately with Bridger Bowl **HERE**.