GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Feb 14, 2021

Good Morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, February 14th, Valentine's Day, at 7:05 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by our Valentines, Nina, Allyson, Leila and Amy. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Since yesterday morning the mountains got a trace of new snow. In the Bridger Range, east wind has been 25-35 mph with gusts of 30-50 mph. Elsewhere wind has been easterly at 5-15 mph with gusts to 20 mph. This morning temperatures are teens below zero to single digits above zero F. Today temperatures will climb to single digits and low teens above zero F. Wind direction will be variable at 0-10 mph. Snow is expected tonight with 1-2" possible by morning and more through Tuesday.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Island Park

Weak, sugary snow near the base of the snowpack makes large avalanches possible to trigger today. The snowpack has been slowly stabilizing since the mountains received 2-4 feet of snow last weekend, but we continue to get reports of unstable slopes. Yesterday in the southern Madison Range a snowmobiler triggered and was partially buried in an avalanche. They were not injured (**photos from Cabin Creek**). Their group also remotely triggered two other slides. Skiers in the Bridger Range saw a slide occur from wind-loaded terrain near the ridge, uncertain whether it was skier or naturally triggered (**photo and info**). On Thursday, two separate groups triggered large avalanches in the Lionhead area and near Big Sky (**Lionhead photo**, **Portal Creek photo**).

East winds yesterday and overnight drifted recent snow into fresh slabs that could break easily today, especially in the Bridger Range where wind was strongest. East winds are less common, and form slabs in unusual locations. These slabs are large enough to be harmful, and could trigger a much larger avalanche on sugary snow near the ground.

This season's untrustworthy snowpack continues to show signs of instability and creates heightened avalanche danger. Today the avalanche danger is MODERATE. Carefully evaluate the snowpack and consequences of a slide before riding on or underneath steep slopes. As Ian indicated in his **video from Teepee Basin** a few days ago, don't let "stable" snowpack test results cause complacency. Remember recent human triggered slides as "unstable" test results.

Cooke City

Yesterday Doug snowmobiled north of Cooke City. In his **video** he mentions two types of terrain to be extra cautious of: 1) heavily wind-loaded slopes and 2) slopes with a relatively shallow snowpack (less than 4 or 5 feet deep). Be especially cautious of slopes that have both, heavy wind-loading on top of a shallow snowpack. Earlier

in the week large natural avalanches broke on these types of slopes. This activity included a large avalanche on the south face of Mt. Abundance (**photo**), a slide on Town Hill (**photo**), slides low on Woody Ridge (**photo**), and a large slide near Mt. Zimmer (**photo**). Yesterday, skiers south of Cooke City saw a recent natural avalanche on a heavily wind-loaded slope (**info**). Today, human triggered avalanches are possible and the avalanche danger is MODERATE. Carefully evaluate snowpack and terrain before riding steep slopes, and allow no more than one person at a time on or underneath steep slopes.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can submit them via our **website**, email (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

See our **education calendar** for an up-to-date list of all local classes. Here are a few select upcoming events and opportunities to check out:

Every Saturday in Cooke City, FREE snowpack update and rescue practice at the Round Lake Warming Hut between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. **Poster with More Info**.

February 19 and 20, Companion Rescue Clinic. Registration HERE.

February 22, 6-7 p.m., Forecaster Chat: Rethinking Avalanche Terrain from a Strategic Perspective, Hosted online by Uphill Pursuits, Link to Join HERE

February 26 and 27, Women's Companion Rescue Clinic with SheJumps. Registration HERE.