

## **GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Dec 18, 2014**

Good morning. This is Mark Staples with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Thursday, December 18 at 7:30 a.m. Today's advisory is sponsored by a **Montana FWP Recreation Trails Grant**. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

### Mountain Weather

Since yesterday morning the Bridger Range received another 3 inches of snow while most other places received a trace to an inch. Winds this morning were surprisingly light, blowing 10 mph gusting 15 mph from the S to W with temperatures in the mid-teens F. Today a few snowflakes may fall in the afternoon but not accumulate. Temperatures should climb into the low 20s F, and winds should increase a little mostly blowing from the SW. A little snow will come Friday night and a more potent storm should arrive late Saturday/early Sunday.

### Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

#### Bridger Range

Snowfall from yesterday's storm totaled 5 inches (0.6 inches [SWE](#)) in the Bridger Range. Stronger winds blew yesterday afternoon, and skiers in the northern Bridger Range in Frazier Basin triggered many 6-10 inch wind slabs ([photo](#)). Last week the surface snow faceted and weakened on many slopes. Even on non-wind loaded slopes near Wolverine Bowl just north of the ski area, a skier observed many natural avalanches (3-4" thick) that propagated surprising distances, a good indication of faceted snow under them. With a layer of weak facets under the new snow in many places, today the avalanche danger is [CONSIDERABLE](#) on wind loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a [MODERATE](#) danger.

#### Gallatin Range Madison Range

#### Lionhead area near West Yellowstone Cooke City

Yesterday's snowfall was not enough to change the avalanche danger but there are a few things to watch for. Last week the snow surface faceted and weakened during warm sunny days and clear cold nights. Doug found this weak layer about 1 foot deep on Mt Blackmore on Tuesday ([video](#)), and Eric and I found this layer last Friday near West Yellowstone before it was buried ([video](#)). In some places a weak layer of surface hoar (frozen dew) formed on the snow surface and was buried by snow from this weekend and yesterday.

A layer of facets remains near the ground. This layer formed during the second week of November and has changed a lot since then. In some places it remains very weak. In other places it gained strength. Near Cooke City on Tuesday, I found this layer strong in most places where the snowpack is 3-4 feet deep but still very weak in steep rocky areas ([video](#), [photo](#)). Without much stress from new snow this layer remains dormant on many slopes but could awaken if we get a heavy load of new snow this weekend.

With two weak layers in the snowpack, avalanches are definitely possible and today 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](mailto:mtavalanche@gmail.com) or call us at 587-6984.

## **AVALANCHE EDUCATION and EVENTS**

Take a look at our [Education Calendar](#) for all our classes being offered.

**TONIGHT: Avalanche Awareness (1-hr) at the Yellowstone Association in Gardiner, Thursday, December 18, 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

**TODAY: Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**

West Yellowstone: Dec 18 and 19, 2014: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/12955>

Five hours of lectures are followed by a full day field course. Topics covered include: avalanche terrain recognition, the affect weather has on avalanche hazard, the development of the mountain snowpack, decision making skills, and basic search and rescue procedures.

**Snowmobiler Rescue Course**, Cooke City, December 27, 0800-1200. Register here: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/13721>