

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Sun Mar 24, 2013

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Sunday, March 24 at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Import Group** in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center** sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Overnight the mountains picked up a trace of new snow. This morning temperatures are ranging from the single digits above or below zero F and winds are light out of the WNW blowing 5-10 mph. Today, a cold northwest flow will allow highs to warm into the upper teens to low 20s F and winds will stay light out the WNW. Skies will stay partly to mostly cloudy with both sun and light snow showers likely throughout the day. A ridge of high pressure will build this evening producing clear skies and warmer temperatures tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Madison Range Gallatin Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone Cooke City

The combination of sun, snow and good stability is making for great skiing and riding conditions. Yesterday, my partner and I toured into Frazier Basin in the northern Bridger Range and observed tracks in steep avalanche terrain ([photo](#)). When conditions are stable, there is nothing wrong with pushing it on steep slopes.

The problem during good stability is complacency. It becomes easy to let your guard down and bend the basic rules of safe backcountry travel. Although it's becoming increasingly difficult to trigger a slide, it's important that skiers and riders stay focused and prepared in case a slide does occur.

This means:

- Everyone carries rescue gear and knows how to use it.
- Only one person at a time is riding a slope.
- You're always watching your partner from a **safe** location.

Today, the primary avalanche concern will be wind loaded slopes. This problem is most widespread in upper elevation terrain below ridgelines ([photo](#), [photo](#)). Although easy to recognize and avoid, wind loaded slopes have a tendency to catch skiers and riders off guard. Before jumping into steep terrain, always consider the ride you would take and how a rescue would be conducted if caught.

Another Problem: Cornices have grown very large and can break farther back than one might expect ([photo](#)). Steering clear of these monsters both above and below ridgelines is a good way to stay out of trouble. Read the [accident report](#) from the most recent fatality in Haines Alaska that was caused by a cornice break.

Today, human triggered avalanches are possible on wind loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees which have a **MODERATE** avalanche danger. All other slopes have a **LOW** avalanche danger.

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.