

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Fri Nov 8, 2013

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with early season snowpack information issued Friday, November 8 at 7:30 a.m. Today's information is sponsored by [Mystery Ranch](#) in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**. This information will be updated as conditions change.

Mountain Weather

We are welcoming all this new snow with open arms. In the last 24 hours the mountains of southwest Montana picked up three to four inches of dense snow. Cooke City, never to be outdone, received an inch of [SWE](#) which equals almost a foot of new snow at the upper elevations. Mountain temperatures are in the mid-teens and will rise to near 40F over the next few days. Winds have been strong out of the west to northwest and averaging 20-30 mph with gusts hitting the 50s. Today will remain windy, but die down over the weekend. Other than another inch or two of more snow this morning, the weekend looks to be cloudy with no significant storms.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Yesterday Mark and I toured up Bridger Bowl and headed north. I have to admit, it was the best skiing and deepest powder of the season. Yes, it was my first and only day of skiing, but it still counts!

A medium-sized slab avalanche on Saddle Peak broke under the ridgeline in the last few days. Other avalanche activity in the Bridger Range and Yellowstone Club were reported earlier in the week after Monday's snowstorm ([photo](#)).

The mountains have two to three feet of snow on the ground with the Cooke City area measuring four to five feet. The weakest layer in the snowpack is facets in the lower half. This layer has varying degrees of thickness and strength. As an example, Mark and I found relatively good stability on a north-facing pit on The Ramp ([snowpit](#)), but Bridger Bowl Snow Safety not only saw the avalanche on Saddle Peak but also got collapsing (whumphs) as they skied and poor stability test scores on facets near the ground ([photo](#)). These are signs of instability that should not be forgotten this weekend, especially since last night's new snow and wind-loading have added even more burden to the snowpack. We must keep in mind that snow depth and stability is variable this time of year, more than we might find mid-winter.

The mountains around Cooke City deserve a special mention regarding avalanches. There are weak, sugary facets near the ground which were collapsing with the weight of a skier earlier in the week. A foot of new snow in less than 24 hours, especially with 30-50 mph winds, will create avalanches. I expect natural avalanche activity today which is a sign of very poor stability and dangerous travel conditions.

Regardless where you go, my advice is to quickly dig down to the ground and do a few stability tests before committing to a slope. This is solid advice any time of the winter, but especially pertinent now given the variability.

DANGER RATINGS AND FIELD OBSERVATIONS

We will not be issuing danger ratings until we get more data about the snowpack. We need your help. Drop us a line with any of your snowpack observations, pictures or snowpits to mtavalanche@gmail.com. You can also call in your observations in at 587-6984.

OTHER GOOD STUFF

We started a blog this season. You can find it on the [main menu of our website](#). We will use it to post relevant avalanche information that might not make it into the avalanche advisory. We will also post articles that we write for newspapers and magazines to give them more life. So far Mark wrote a piece on whether phones interfere with avalanche beacons and Eric wrote about the upcoming ice festival.

EVENTS/EDUCATION

1-Hour Avalanche Awareness Classes

HELENA, November 13, 6:30 p.m. at the Basecamp.

BOZEMAN, November 19, 6:30 p.m. at REI

BIG TIMBER, November 19, 7 p.m. at Big Timber High School

BILLINGS, November 20, 6 p.m. at Basecamp

BIG SKY, November 20, 7 p.m. at Grizzly Outfitters

Go to our [EDUCATION CALENDAR](#) for details and more courses.

Intro to Avalanches w/ Field Course, MSU; 4, 5 and 7 December

Info and registration: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7112>

Snowmobiler Intro to Avalanches w/ Field Course, West Yellowstone: 19 and 20 December

Info and registration: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7116>