

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Wed Mar 12, 2014

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, March 12 at 7:30 a.m. **Cooke City Motorsports** and **Yamaha**, in partnership with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

AVALANCHE FATALITY: COOKE CITY

I am saddened to report that an 18 year old male snowmobiler from Minnesota died in an avalanche on the northwest face of Crown Butte outside Cooke City yesterday. The victim was stopped on the slope while two others were riding on it when the avalanche was triggered. The others rode off, but the victim was caught and buried. Neither he, nor anyone in his party of seven, was wearing a beacon. Cooke City Search and Rescue located him with a probe pole under six feet of debris near the toe of the avalanche about 2+ hours later. ([photo1](#) , [photo2](#)) Our sincerest sympathies go out to the family and friends of the victim.

This is the fifth avalanche fatality in Montana and the fourth in the last 18 days. ([table](#))

Mark and Eric are investigating the avalanche today and will write a full report later in the week.

Mountain Weather

Under clear skies temperatures are in the teens with west to southwest winds averaging 15-20 mph and gusting to 30 mph. Today will be sunny and winds will be moderate from the southwest as mountain temperatures rise to the upper thirties. The rest of the week looks to be sunny, warm and spring-like.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#)

[Lionhead area near West Yellowstone](#) [Cooke City](#)

Yesterday was a day of avalanches. Most mountain locations got over twenty inches of dense new snow (2" SWE) with strong, variable winds loading slopes and gullies at all elevations. The ski areas reported a lot of avalanche activity in the new snow as well as a few slides breaking deep. Many large natural avalanches were seen in the Bridger Range, numerous avalanches of various sizes were seen up Hyalite ([photo](#)), and also the large human triggered slide outside Cooke City.

Today, anything can happen. There could be dry avalanches in the new snow, avalanches breaking 3-4 feet deep on the layer of facets formed in January, large deep slab avalanches releasing near the ground or wet avalanches on sunny slopes. Take your pick because they are all possible today.

Sunny skies, calm winds and new snow can embolden us to take extra risks, but the snowpack doesn't care about our desires. It still needs time to adjust to the new load and triggering avalanches remains likely. Natural activity has subsided, but this afternoon as the sun heats and melts the snow surface I expect an encore. Traveling in or underneath avalanche terrain (slopes steeper than 30 degrees) is dangerous and not recommended. For today, the avalanche danger is rated a solid **CONSIDERABLE** with the danger rising to **HIGH** on steep, sun exposed slopes this afternoon.

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.