

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Mar 3, 2023

UPDATE at 8:15 a.m for COOKE CITY.

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Friday, March 3rd at 6:45 a.m. Today's forecast is in memory of Ben Richards. [Ben was killed in an avalanche on Yellow Mountain near Big Sky 16 years ago today](#). This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

At 5 a.m. there is 1" of new snow in Hyalite, 3-4" in Big Sky to Lionhead, and 1" in Cooke City. Wind is from the W-SW averaging 15-20 mph with gusts of 38 mph (58 in the Bridger Range). Mountain temperatures are in the low teens under cloudy skies and scattered snow showers. Wind will continue today, temperatures will reach the high teens and snowfall will drop 1-2" during the day.

COOKE CITY

UPDATE: *We are raising the avalanche danger in Cooke City to **CONSIDERABLE**.*

In the last 12-24 hours there was a skier-triggered avalanche and a natural avalanche at Daisy Pass ([observation and photo](#)). The natural [slide](#) was found by the groomer on the road near the pass. With only an inch of new snow and moderate winds the snowpack was not expected to avalanche. I was wrong. Our uncertainty on what exactly is going on is high. [Cooke City had many large avalanches](#) break into Tuesday. We are unsure what layer these slides are breaking on. My advice is to stay off of avalanche terrain. Natural and human-triggered slides are likely.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



Southern Madison Southern Gallatin Lionhead Range

The mountains south of Big Sky to West Yellowstone and Cooke City harbor weak layers which are a concern. Yesterday's 1-3" of snow and southwest wind are not helping the stability. It has snowed 11 of the last 12 days and the snowpack has not gotten a restful break. Incremental loading is on our mind ([Weather and Avalanche Log](#)) as are recent signs of instability. [Cooke City had many large avalanches](#) break into Tuesday. Dave looked at a [recent slide in Taylor Fork](#), I found [weak snow at Lionhead](#), skiers had a [whumpf at Quake Lake](#) and [unstable pit scores at Bacon Rind](#). Although avalanches are not imminent, they could still be triggered by a sledder or skier. We have useful links to [videos, photos and observations](#) that give color and depth to the recent slides and red flag activity.

Wind and snow can be a dangerous combination. We need to be careful to not trigger slides on wind-drifted slopes. Stay clear of these thicker, smooth slabs of drifted snow, dig and test the layers under your feet and be wary on steep slopes, wind-loaded or not.

The avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#).



Bridger Range Northern Gallatin Northern Madison

The mountains around Bozeman and Big Sky have been windy with 6-12" of new snow since Sunday. Wind has blown the new snow into drifts, with each day's snowfall creating a new, dense layer in the snowpack. Overall these layers are bonding well, but last night's wind coupled with loose snow ([6' at Mt. Blackmore yesterday](#)) will keep our avalanche eyeballs wide open. Shooting cracks in wind drifts are a red flag of instability.

Yesterday, in my snowpit video in Hyalite, I mentioned staying off of wind-loaded slopes, advice that applies today. Last Friday and Monday there were large slides in Hyalite on the east face of [Mt. Blackmore](#) and [Mt. Bole](#), which indicates deeper instabilities on a few, isolated slopes.

Given the possibility of avalanches and the need to investigate the snowpack for instabilities, the danger is rated [MODERATE](#).

Please share avalanche, snowpack or weather observations via our [website](#), email (mtavalanche@gmail.com), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram ([#gnfacobs](#)).



Island Park

The mountains have gotten snow 11 of the last 12 days totaling almost 25". Buried weak layers which are a concern. We also need to be careful to not trigger slides on wind-drifted slopes. Stay clear of these thicker, smooth slabs of drifted snow, dig and test the layers under your feet and be wary on steep slopes, wind-loaded or not.



Cooke City

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: [Events and Education Calendar](#).

TODAY! March 3, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Bozeman Splitfest - Companion Rescue Clinic. Classroom session followed by a field session. [More information and registration HERE](#).

TODAY! March 3-5, Bozeman Splitfest. [More info and register here](#).

TODAY! March 3 & 4, Companion Rescue Clinic. Online classroom session Friday evening followed by a field session from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. [More information and registration HERE](#).

March 9, 6 p.m.-7 p.m., 1-Hour Awareness - Spring conditions. FREE at REI Bozeman.

March 10 & 11, SheJumps - Women's Companion Rescue Clinic. Online classroom session Friday evening followed by a field session from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. [More information and registration HERE](#).

Every Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. ***Avalanche Rescue Training***, drop in for any amount of time. Round Lake Warming Hut, Cooke City. Free.

[***Loss in the Outdoors***](#), is a support group for those who have been affected by grief and loss related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.