

[GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Fri Nov 18, 2016](#)

Good Afternoon. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center with early season avalanche information issued on Friday, November 18th at 2:30 p.m. Today's bulletin is sponsored by [Mystery Ranch](#). This information will be updated as conditions change.

Mountain Weather

The unsettled pattern that dropped snow over southwest Montana has now pushed to the east. This has allowed a ridge of high pressure to build over the area. This ridge will remain stationary for much of the weekend producing sunny skies and warmer temperatures. Highs tomorrow (Saturday) will warm into the upper 30s to low 40s and winds will blow 5-10 mph out of the W-SW. The ridge gradually begins to break down Sunday, producing partly cloudy skies and stronger winds Sunday afternoon. There is a slight chance of rain and snow showers early next week.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

For many, 1-2 feet of snow doesn't quite warrant a trip to the backcountry. For others, that's all it takes to throw on the skies in search of turns. Today, my partner and I braved the thin conditions in the northern Bridgers. What we found was no big surprise - highly variable conditions with most skiable runs existing on heavily wind loaded slopes ([video](#), [photo](#)). This of course is the type of terrain where most avalanches occur.

Fortunately, most of the wind slabs we encountered were firm and well bonded. However, there's little question isolated areas still hold the potential to produce avalanches. Over the next few days - every steep, wind loaded slope deserves respect and should be approached with caution before hiking up or skiing down.

One area to pay close attention to this weekend will be Cooke City. Fisher Creek Snotel site is showing nearly two feet of settled on the ground and we've received reports of deeper snow at higher elevations ([photo](#)). A local observer in the area reported collapsing and cracking on NE facing slopes in non-wind loaded terrain today. This is bull's eye information that buried weak layers exist and hold the potential to produce avalanches.

The bottom line is – be cautious when traveling in the backcountry. Avalanches are not uncommon this time of year and a thin snowpack is dangerous, even if you're not caught in a slide. Remember - it's still early and now is not the time for a season ending injury.

We will update this information as conditions change. In the meantime, we need your observations, so if you get out please drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call 406-587-6984.

[Upcoming Events and Education](#)

30 Nov. and 1 Dec., **Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**, 7-9:30 p.m. at MSU Sub Ballroom B: Sign up [HERE](#).

6 December, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7:30 p.m. at MSU with Backcountry Squatters Ski Club, SUB Procrastinator Theater.

7 December, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7:30 p.m. at REI.

15 December, **Avalanche Awareness and Beacon Practice**, 6-8 p.m. at Beall Park.

HELENA

8 December, **Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7:30 p.m. at The Basecamp.

WEST YELLOWSTONE

15 and 16 December, **Snowmobile Introduction to Avalanches w/ Field Day**, West Yellowstone Holiday Inn Conference Hotel. More info and sign up [HERE](#).

Cooke City

25 Nov. and 26 Nov.; 2 Dec. and 3 Dec.; 9 Dec. and 10 Dec., **Weekly rescue training and snowpack update**, Cooke City Chamber of Commerce on Friday and field location TBA on Saturday.