Weak Layers and Mid/Low-Elevation Snow

Date
Mon, 02/10/2025 - 12:00
Activity
Skiing

Today, we traveled up the Deer Creek drainage north of Big Sky. We experienced no cracking or collapsing and saw no recent avalanches. We dug in the snow on a S aspect at 7680' with unremarkable results. We dug again on a NE aspect at 8200' and got an unstable test result (ECTP 28) on surface hoar and near-surface facets buried under a 2' slab (F - 1F+ hardness).

A few keys points from today:

- Mid to Low-elevation snow exists in many areas that typically do not hold rideable snow during the winter. These zones are typically much shallower and weaker. Avalanche terrain exists at mid to low-elevations too. Assume a shallow, weak snowpack in these areas and easily confirm by digging down to see what is going on underneath your feet.
- Persistent weak layers are still present and are reactive in snowpits. Surface hoar and near-surface facets exist around 2' deep in the snowpack. These layers do not exist on every slope and were stubborn in snowpit tests, but there is still a possibility of triggering an avalanche within this layer.
- Wind loaded terrain grows less sensitive by the day but is still where the likelihood of finding the most unstable snow is the highest.

There are a lot of abnormal, mid to lower-elevation zones out there holding great snow and riding conditions - just remember that there are still terrain and snowpack features to be on the lookout for and avoided. Step off the skin track, look out for signs of red flags and dig down to see what is going on beneath your feet before committing to ascending or descending steep slopes.

Region
Northern Madison
Location (from list)
NORTHERN MADISON RANGE
Observer Name
H. Darby