

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Mar 22, 2020

Good Morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, March 22nd at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by [Your Montana Chevy Dealers](#) and [Mystery Ranch](#).

* Ski Areas are closed for the season. Backcountry conditions exist. There is no avalanche control or ski patrol services. Please stay clear of workers, chair lifts and other equipment. Watch [Dave's video](#) explaining to expect backcountry conditions if you tour in the ski area.

Mountain Weather

A brief snow squall this morning could drop 1-2" in the mountains. Temperatures are teens to 20s F and wind is west to northwest at 5-20 mph with gusts to 35 mph. Skies will gradually clear this afternoon with temperatures in the 20s to low 30s F and west wind at 5-20 mph. No snow is expected overnight.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



All Regions

Today the snowpack is stable on most slopes and avalanches are unlikely. Travel in avalanche terrain always comes with risk. Many people are traveling in more isolated corners of the backcountry which increases the chance one or two will find an unstable slope.

On Friday skiers in the Absarokas (outside the advisory area) unintentionally triggered a cornice which broke a large avalanche deep in the snowpack ([photos and details](#)), and a separate group triggered an avalanche that broke over three feet deep on weak sugary snow on the ground. Nobody was caught ([photos and details](#)). Avalanches on weak layers near the ground are unlikely, but carry big consequences. Recent activity reminds us to consider this instability before riding in avalanche terrain.

Dave was in the Taylor Fork on Friday and backed off a plan to ski steep terrain after he dug and found a poor snowpack structure ([video](#)). His Instagram photos are not as cool as he hoped, but at least he went skiing and came home safe. Probe and dig to look for weak sugary snow at the base of the snowpack before riding steep slopes. Also keep an eye out for surface hoar buried about 8" deep ([photo](#)). Stay far back from the edge along ridgelines and minimize time on slopes with large cornices above.

Yesterday a skier near Big Sky triggered a small wind slab on a high elevation northerly slope ([photo and details](#)). He was in less consequential terrain and was not caught. Slides like this appear small, but carry large consequences where they can push you over cliffs or into terrain traps. Today the avalanche danger is rated [LOW](#), but avalanches are not impossible. Continue to practice safe backcountry travel protocols and be diligent with snowpack and terrain assessment.

We will end daily avalanche forecasts on Sunday, April 5th and continue with general bulletins every Monday and Friday through April. Over the next couple weeks we will take down our weather stations and receive little to no observations from guides or ski patrol. With more people in the backcountry and ski areas closed, we need help gathering field data. If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can fill out an [observation form](#), email us (mtavalanche@gmail.com), leave a VM at 406-587-6984, or Instagram ([#gnfacobs](#)).

Social Distancing in the Backcountry

These days we essentially have to treat other people like avalanche terrain during [high danger](#), and keep our distance. These are challenging times and we hope all can enjoy the mountains to ease the stress. It is important we all do our part to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and be diligent with social distancing in parking lots and along trails. Please do not carpool with people outside your household, keep groups small, and don't have social gatherings in the parking lot (consider this with dogs as well). Choose mellower objectives to minimize the risk of injury and overtaxing local EMS services. Finally, be courteous and patient. A smile and hello are contagious even from six feet away.

Avalanche Education and Events

The GNFAC and Friends avalanche education programs have been cancelled due to COVID-19. Thank you to all our amazing instructors for a great year of education!

Our education calendar lists awareness lectures and field courses offered by other providers: [Events and Education Calendar](#).