



April 10, 2017

We are wrapping up our 27th year of operation after issuing 138 avalanche advisories. Less snow in the northern mountains (87% of average) contrasted with the southern ranges where up to 117% of average snowpack was measured. Our first human triggered slide was by a skier in the Bridger Range on November 24th. A weak and unstable layer of snow at the ground had difficulty supporting early season snowfall and we issued our first avalanche warning on December 2nd, the first day of daily advisories. On December 11th a skier outside Cooke City was killed in an avalanche on a small, steep slope that carried him into timber. This was our only fatality of the season, although there were some close calls with 31 avalanche incidents resulting in 7 people being caught, 2 partially buried and 2 fully buried. Nationally, there are only 11 avalanche deaths this season compared with a 10-year average of 27.

Storms spiked the avalanche danger and we issued 13 avalanche warnings, including our first ever Extreme danger rating on February 11th for Cooke City. In this storm, 11" of snow water equivalent (11+' of snow) fell, the 3rd highest 14-day total ever measured at Fisher Creek SNOTEL site. The avalanches were huge. One slide on Mt. Henderson put over 20 feet of debris on a groomed snowmobile trail. The last time this occurred was in 1997.

December and January was the busiest part of the season with an elevated avalanche danger, crowds in the backcountry and a nearly continuous schedule of avalanche awareness classes. During this time we relied heavily on field volunteers and observations from the public, along with 20 professional avalanche educators with the Friends of the Avalanche Center. We could not do our job without everyone's support.

GNFAC INDEX

- Number of people who receive our daily avalanche advisories: 4,707
- Percentage visits to mtavalanche.com on mobile phone, desktop and tablet: 54%, 40%, 6%

- Total number of avalanche classes and attendees: 117 and 5,266
 - Total number of elementary and secondary school students: 724
 - Total number of snowmobilers and classes: 1,098 and 52
- Percentage of avalanche advisories accessed through Facebook: 17%.
 - Number of followers we have on FB and its 1-year increase: 7,128 and 30%
- Number of videos we posted and total views: 79 and 150,388
 - Increase in views from last season: 50%
- Number of subscribers to YouTube, Instagram and Twitter: 2,367, 4,686 and 1,849
- Total number days we went into the field to check the snowpack: 106
 - Number of days with a volunteer and each other: 79 and 27
 - Number of snowpits recorded: 85
- Witnesses to Doug hitting a tree with his snowmobile: 0
 - Number of pictures Alex took after the fact: at least 10
 - Number of those that have been posted: 0
 - Alex's boss': Doug
- Number of times Alex's snowmobile "ghost rode" downhill with him running in hot pursuit: 1 that we know of.
- Outside temperature when Eric forgot his beacon on purpose (according to Alex): -26°F

Alex, Eric and I rely on community partnerships and volunteer efforts to help run the center. Almost 40% of our funding comes from outside the Forest Service. The Friends of the Avalanche Center and a grant from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks fill in the shortfall. Businesses that support our work through the Friends include: Grizzly Outfitters, Yellowstone Artic Yamaha, Yamaha Motor Corp, the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, Mystery Ranch, World Boards, Spark R&D, Montana Ale Works, Community Food Coop, Cooke City Super 8, Excel Physical Therapy, Bridger Bowl, Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association, Buck Products, Wisetail, Alpine Orthopedics, Javaman, Bountiful Table, Katabatic Brewery, Edward Jones, and Cooke City Motorsports.

Enjoy the spring and summer. We will be back in full swing this October in anticipation of record breaking snows.

All the best,



Doug Chabot
Director

Forest Service

Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center

p: 406-587-6984
dchabot@fs.fed.us

Caring for the land and serving people