



Forest Service

Flathead National Forest
650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406)758-5404
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>
<https://twitter.com/FlatheadNF>
<https://www.facebook.com/discovertheflathead>

News Release



Media Contact: Teresa Wenum
406/758-5252
twenum@fs.fed.us

Flathead Avalanche Center Releases Incident Report on Fatal Avalanche

Kalispell, MT., January 27, 2016 – Today the Flathead Avalanche Center released their final report on the Swede Creek Avalanche Incident that occurred January 23, 2016 in the Whitefish Mountain Range on Flathead National Forest near the vicinity of Haines Pass. The report documents the events and conditions surrounding the fatal avalanche in which one snowmobiler was fully buried and subsequently died. The full report can be found on the Flathead Avalanche Center's website, <http://www.flatheadavalanche.org/>.

The report classified the avalanche as a soft slab avalanche unintentionally triggered by a snowmobiler and large enough to bury, injure or kill a person. The avalanche occurred on an average slope angle of 35 degrees and released on a layer of weak, faceted snow beneath a January 12 rain crust. The slide was approximately 200 feet wide and the crown depth ranged from 2 to nearly 5 feet deep. The avalanche ran approximately 200 vertical feet.

According to the Flathead Avalanche Center there are several persistent weak layers in the existing snowpack that vary in distribution and how they react making conditions tricky. Current travel in avalanche terrain requires careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision making. Conditions can change quickly.

All backcountry recreationists are reminded to stay current with local weather conditions and avalanche danger. Check the daily avalanche advisories on the Flathead Avalanche Center website before heading out. Advisories include information about snowpack conditions, weather forecasts, and hazard evaluations. Review the observations and incident reports that provide further insight into snowpack conditions. Make sure to travel with your avalanche safety equipment--avalanche transceiver, probe pole and shovel-- and know how to use them.

Page 2 – Avalanche Incident Report

The Flathead Avalanche Center is a partnership between the Flathead National Forest and the non-profit Friends of the Flathead Avalanche Center. The center strives to provide quality avalanche information products for the public and area land management agencies that include avalanche advisories and education.

For more information about the final report on the Swede Creek Avalanche Incident and the Flathead Avalanche Center, contact Center Director, Erich Peitzsch, 406/387-3821.

-USDA-



Forest Service