



Flathead National Forest

Media Release

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New Series on Winter Survival and Awareness to Compliment Free Avalanche Awareness Workshops

The Flathead National Forest in partnership with Glacier Country Avalanche Center is sponsoring a new series of presentations regarding winter survival as well as several free avalanche awareness classes and a volunteer avalanche field observer training workshop.

A workshop for volunteers interested in providing field observations on area winter backcountry conditions are invited to a training session on Wednesday, December 9, 6:30-8:30pm at the Forest Service Office in Kalispell at 650 Wolfpack Way. Volunteer participants must have completed a Level 1 avalanche education course or have equivalent background and knowledge prior to the field observation workshop.

The workshop will focus on data collection standards and techniques for conducting backcountry snowpack evaluations and recording weather information. After completing the workshop, volunteers will be allowed to post their observations and findings on the Glacier Country Avalanche Center website.

A basic avalanche awareness class will be Thursday, December 10, 6:30-8:00 pm, at the Whitefish Public Library. Flathead National Forest spokesperson Denise Germann said, "This class is a good basic introduction to avalanche awareness and safety, and a great refresher." Germann encourages everyone that recreates or works in the area to consider participating in the basic class. Registration is not needed.

In addition, an advanced avalanche awareness class for skiers, snowboarders, snowshoers and mountaineers will be held January 4-16. This class consists of four evening lectures on Jan 4, 6, 11 and 13, followed by two field sessions on January 9 and 16. The class includes information about avalanche terrain, mountain weather and snowpack, stability evaluation and decision making, and avalanche rescue. Participants are encouraged to attend all sessions to gain maximum benefit.

An advanced avalanche awareness class for snowmobilers will be held January 25 and 27, and February 1 and 3. The field sessions will be held January 30 and February 6.

A **new series of presentations** regarding winter backcountry conditions and survival will begin on Monday, December 14, with a program about mountain weather and early season snowpack. The presentation will be held at the Flathead National Forest Office at 6:30pm. Additional topics will be presented throughout the winter. For more information please contact 758-5295.

Germann said, “We have some great winter recreation opportunities in Northwest Montana, and with that opportunity comes individual responsibility to be aware of avalanche hazard recognition and winter survival techniques.” The classes sponsored by the Forest Service and Glacier County Avalanche Center are free and available to all. Germann highly encourages everyone to consider participating in classes and presentations offered.

Registration is not required for any of the workshops or classes, but participants are encouraged to contact the Flathead National Forest at 758-5295 or visit www.glacieravalanche.org for more information.

REMINDER:

The Flathead National Forest issues avalanche advisories for Northwest Montana throughout the winter, beginning the first Friday in December or as weather conditions warrant. Advisories are issued once a week, on Friday mornings, until the third week in December when they are issued Tuesday and Friday mornings until April. Advisories include information about snowpack conditions, weather forecasts, and hazard evaluations. Visit www.glacieravalanche.org or call 406-257-8402 for these advisories. Anyone traveling in the backcountry will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations.

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