

**Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center**  
**Avalanche Advisory**

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Good Morning, this is Kevin Davis with the avalanche advisory, valid for today, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011, with an outlook for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and the hazard rating will remain valid through midnight, February 4<sup>th</sup>. Special thanks to Idaho Parks and Recreation for sponsoring this morning's avalanche advisory. Thanks to Silver Mountain Ski Patrol for sending us pit data from the Mountain.

We're climbing up out of the deep freeze once again with temperatures on the rise. Winds are picking up out of the west and have been gusting a consistent 30mph in the northern mountains. Winds have been milder to the south and more variable. Temperature and winds will be two big factors in your avalanche assessment this weekend. Add to that a few inches of snow to the north and potentially a lot to the south and you have some concerns for triggering avalanches. The very cold temperatures of this week have weakened the upper 1 foot of the pack and you'll notice some denser slabs over a weak layer. How will the forecast weather affect our stability? To the south expect significant snowfall today. A 100% chance of 4-8 inches of new snow, 34 degrees, and SW winds gusting to 30mph. Tonight, 2-4 more inches is likely, with a low of 29 and strong westerly winds gusting to 25mph. To the north, expect 1-3 inches of new snow with strong west winds gusting to 26mph and 32 degrees. Snow tapers off tonight with only a slight chance of a trace of snow but continued west winds and temps in the mid 20s. The weather for the weekend looks to moderate with the winds and slightly cooler temperatures and a decreasing chance of snowfall. Based on the forecast, the avalanche hazard will persist for Saturday and Sunday.

**Avalanche conditions for the Selkirk and Cabinet Mountain Region are rated as MODERATE on all aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 4,500 feet.** Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are **possible**. Pockets of **CONSIDERABLE** avalanche hazard could exist on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees. Natural avalanches are possible and human triggered avalanches are **probable**.

This week we were able to travel in both the Selkirk and Cabinet ranges and found a very similar snowpack above the MLK ice crust, which is very firm and supportive. The upper 1 foot of the pack is causing the most concern since it became highly faceted from the cold weather. Shear tests were consistent and clean around changes in density and a thin ice crust. Surface hoar formed and exists on all aspects but was getting blown off exposed aspects but will linger in sheltered aspects and lower elevations. Watch for this to become buried with the new snow. Avoid steep convex terrain on windloaded aspects.

**Avalanche conditions for the St. Regis Basin and St. Joe Mountain Region are rated as MODERATE on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible. Avalanche conditions could increase to CONSIDERABLE on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees with expected snowfall and strong winds.**

About 1 foot deep in the pack Carole and Dan found weak, faceted snow around a thin ice crust in the Taft area near 6,000 feet on a SW aspect. The shears required moderate force and did not shear cleanly. The MLK crust was very firm and supportive at just over 2 feet in depth. On a NW aspect on the Kellogg Peak ridgeline at 6,200 feet the Silver Patrol found a highly faceted pack in the upper 2 feet and clean shears about 10 inches deep around a change in density. What should concern you today is already windloaded lee slopes and accumulating snow burying the surface hoar on any steep slope protected from the wind.

The next advisory will be issued next week on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

The State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the IPAC, is conducting (*the last Free*) avalanche workshop in our area for snowmobilers in Bonners Ferry this weekend, February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Attendance to these excellent classes has been great this year. For more information, go to the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department website at [www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov](http://www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov), or call Marc Hildesheim, North Region Trails Specialist, at (208) 769-1511.

The Panhandle Avalanche Center in Sandpoint and Sandpoint Parks and Recreation is sponsoring the last free avalanche workshop, "What we can learn from ten years of avalanche accident review in North Idaho", next Wednesday at the new Forest Service Building in Sandpoint at 6PM and is *Free to the public*. Dan and Carole have been teaching to sold out shows in the Wallace area so contact Dan Frigard at 783-2130 for class schedules in the Silver Valley.

If you have a group or club that is interested in more education on avalanche safety we will be available for free avalanche awareness classes beginning in December, so feel free to give us a call. As usual we would appreciate hearing from anyone who happens to observe any recent avalanche activity while out in the backcountry or just wants to let us know what is going on in their area.

Have a safe and pleasant weekend.