

# AVALANCHE ADVISORY

**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

**FORECASTER: Davis**

**IDAHO PANHANDLE AVALANCHE CENTER**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/23/2011**

**DATE ISSUED: 12/23/2011 0730**

**OUTLOOK: 12/23-25/2011**

This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and the hazard rating will remain valid through midnight December 23, 2011. Special thanks to Idaho Parks and recreation for sponsoring this avalanche advisory.

Thanks to Dave Alley and the Crew on Patrol for the pit data from Silver Mountain. Thanks also to Santa for the snow in our stockings, Merry Christmas!

## WEATHER

**TODAY:** Partly sunny skies and mountain temperatures in the mid to high 20s with SE winds 5-11mph and stronger gusts to the south and light westerly winds to the north.

**TONIGHT:** Becoming mostly cloudy as a weak weather system pushes into the northwest with temperatures in the high teens to low 20s and light winds.

**OUTLOOK:** The NWS is forecasting light snowfall to begin on Saturday. This weak system is not enough to push the colder air out so temperatures with the snowfall should stay below freezing initially. More snow is expected with stronger systems pushing in off the Pacific so westerly winds will increase and temperatures may rise slightly by Sunday. **The avalanche danger will increase with the expected weather for the outlook period.**

**Selkirks and Cabinet mountains:** In the Selkirk Mountains yesterday we found about 4 feet of snow on a NW aspect. Very cold and faceted snow above the thick and still hard T-day ice crust. The 12/15 surface hoar layer is intact about 4-6 inches deep and present on multiple aspects, mainly in sheltered terrain. Stability of this layer is good at present due to the light load of very low density snow on top. Another layer of surface hoar exists from the last few days of clear weather and may be more widespread once its buried due to colder temps. Keep a close eye on the temps and snow accumulation with the next storms. We have a structurally weak snowpack above the T-day ice crust and it sounds like next week we could have enough snow to create an unstable slab. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as LOW on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

|                   |   |   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <b>2 Moderate</b> |  | Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern | Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible. | Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas. |
|-------------------|---|---|---|--|

**St. Regis Basin and Silver valley:** A lot of observations from the Silver Valley yesterday. Carole and Dan were at Lookout Pass and found 3 feet of faceted snow on a SE aspect. The weakest layer they found was the faceted snow above the thick T-day ice crust. Shears were not clean on this layer but as the load increases on the structurally weak pack look for more energy in shears at this layer. Pits on Silver Mountain showed strong temperature gradients in the upper 1 foot of the pack, creating weaker bonds. They observed a new layer of surface hoar forming as did Eric Morgan at 5,500 feet on Sunset Peak. He got some rough shears on the buried surface hoar and felt some settlement of the pack as he traveled. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as LOW on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

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Mostly safe sliding out there today. Moderate means human triggered avalanches are possible on steep windloaded aspects above 5,000 feet. As we begin to get new snow be more cautious in your route selection. We will most likely be dealing with 2 layers of buried surface hoar. The more load from accumulating snow the more unstable these layers will become. We could be looking at widespread high avalanche danger by Sunday evening, it depends on how much snow we get.

The next avalanche advisory will be issued December 30<sup>th</sup>.

Contact: Kevin Davis (208) 265-6686, Ed Odegaard (208) 245-6209, or John Olson (208) 265-6635

This message is available by calling (208) 765-7323 or toll-free at 1-866-489-8664.

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In Sandpoint, these classes are currently scheduled.

Jan. 10, **“Fire and Ice, Risk Assessment and Situational Awareness.”**

Feb. 10, **“Ten Years of Avalanche Fatalities in North Idaho.”**

**These classes are *free to the public* and will be held from 6-8PM in the Conference Room of the New Forest Service Building in Sandpoint,, 1602 Ontario St.,, west of town on the way to Dover.. Call Kevin Davis at 265-6686 or John Olson at 946-3378 if you have a group that is interested in attending..**

In the Silver Valley, these classes are currently scheduled.

January 21, “Avalanche Awareness, Route Finding, and Rescue

**In the Silver Valley the class is conducted at the Silver Valley Forest Service Building in Smelterville at 10AM.. The field session,, beacon practice and rescue training will be held at Mullan Pass the same day..**

**Contact Dan Frigard at 783-2131.**

**In St. Maries**, Ed Odegaard is conducting an avalanche workshop at the St. Maries Forest Service on January 26<sup>th</sup> from 5-8pm. Don't miss the chili feed starting at Scheffy's in Avery on January 14<sup>th</sup> where Ed will talk about avalanche factors and dig a pit on the ride at Rutledge Saddle, sounds like a hoot.

The State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the IPNF-AC, is conducting (**Free**) avalanche workshops for snowmobilers this winter in Coeur d' Alene January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, Sandpoint January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. For more information go to the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department website at <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/recreation/snowmobileeducation.aspx>, or call Marc Hildesheim, North Region Trails Specialist, at (208) 769-1511.

Check out these websites from our Neighbors for more information:

<http://www.glacieravalanche.org/currentadvisory.cfm>

<http://www.nwac.us/>

<http://www.avalanche.ca/>

Have a safe and pleasant Holiday!!!!