

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



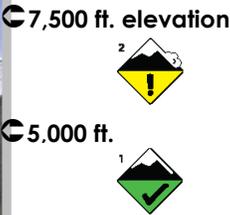
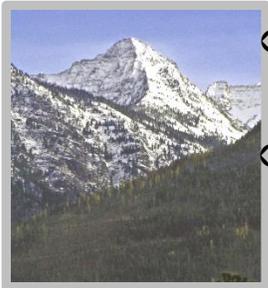
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 8 AM, Tuesday, December 27, 2011
Valid Until: Midnight, Tuesday, December 27, 2011
Next Update: Friday, December 30, 2011
Issued by: Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



Avalanche Danger Summary
2 - Moderate : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain
1 - Low : below 5,000

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - Moderate
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanche unlikely Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small avalanches in specific areas or Larger avalanches in isolated areas Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - below 5,000 ft. elevation

Danger Level	1 - LOW
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally safe avalanche conditions exist Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both natural and human triggered avalanche unlikely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very small avalanches in widespread areas or Small avalanche in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday –Monday --- A weak impulse of moisture on Saturday and early Sunday slipped over the dry air pattern dominating our region for the last four weeks 				
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak impulse of .4 to .6 inches of SWE from afternoon on Saturday through afternoon on Sunday 				
Temperature	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Flathead Area & Kootenai Areas</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temp's climbed from low teens/single digits late Thursday into mid 30's by Saturday night during the time of the snow delivery and then declined into mid/low 20's by Monday </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> </td> </tr> </table>	Flathead Area & Kootenai Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temp's climbed from low teens/single digits late Thursday into mid 30's by Saturday night during the time of the snow delivery and then declined into mid/low 20's by Monday 		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 				
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winds picked up Sunday afternoon transporting new storm snow onto NW, N, NE & E aspects 				

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 12-26-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baree Mountain in the East Cabinets, 30 South of Libby Doris Creek Drainage West Side of Hungry Horse Reservoir, south of Hungry horse Patrol Ridge West of Challenge Cabin near Marias Pass
Observer Report Locations	
Monday, 12-26-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Southern Whitefish Divide along Smokey Divide NE of Big Mountain

Avalanches Observed	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificially triggered small avalanche with failure initiated by cutting cornice blocks which dropped onto a NE aspect. This aspect was storm loaded both with new and wind loaded snow overlying a buried surface hoar layer in Southern Whitefish Range. Depth of fracture was 10 to 15 cms. Isolated natural releases noted on similar aspects and at similar elevation. This observation was posted by Kyle Fedderly on 12/26/2011
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New accumulations of .4 to .6 inches of SWE from new snow and wind loading Saturday afternoon thru Sunday afternoon 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind loading from SW winds on Sunday afternoon at or near ridge tops 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buried surface hoar layer in noted to have failed with artificial releases in the Southern Whitefish Range. Do not know how wide spread this layer is and will require snow pit observations to determine how wide spread by recreational users. A buried ice layer in the Kootenai ranges could provide clean snappy shears with artificial releases with new storm accumulations Weather forecast predicting new storm snow with west/south west winds of 25 to 30 mph across the region 		
Spring Wet Snow		Not applicable		

or Melt-Freeze		
Rain-on-Snow		Not applicable
Loose Snow		None observed
Other Concerns		New storm snow is predicted ... see forecast

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of fast moving systems this week will bring a foot or more of heavy wet snow to many mountain locations. The heaviest snow and strongest winds are expected Wednesday and Thursday. Wednesday will see the largest rises in the snow level this week. Precipitation is expected to be snow at the pass levels or elevations but mid slopes will see some mixed rain and snow or just rain at times.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snow is predicted to be wet with 19 to 26 inches thru Thursday
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain temperatures will be pretty mild under this predicted weather pattern. Daytime highs by Wednesday could climb to 40 degrees and night time temp's could remain from the mid to upper 20's
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W to SW up to 20 to 30mph from Tuesday through Thursday

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The avalanche danger is expected to climb from the current level through Thursday with the prediction of rising snow levels on Wednesday, heavy wet snow and moderate to strong W/SW winds
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New storm snow accompanied by wind overlying pockets of buried surface hoar and ice layers scattered across the region. Weak surface interfaces and shallow snow packs could be stressed with new storm accumulations. Rain is possible above 4500' if freezing levels continue to climb during the predicted storm event
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In spite of the relative widespread stability in past weeks always carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</i> <i>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i> <i>Be alert that if a slope is open enough to ski or highmark currently it is very likely an established avalanche path.</i> <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</i> <i>Know that shallow snow packs are notorious for producing trauma injury and death, washing victims over cliffs and into rocks.</i>

Upcoming Events

Flathead Nat'l Forest will also be presenting our advanced public avalanche awareness safety training for skiers, snowshoers, snowboarders, and mountaineers over the first two weeks of January, 2012. The program is a four night lecture series with two Saturday field sessions. Lecture dates are Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 3,5,10,&12. The all-day Saturday field sessions are January 7&14. Lecture location and time is the same as the weather workshop above.