

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY

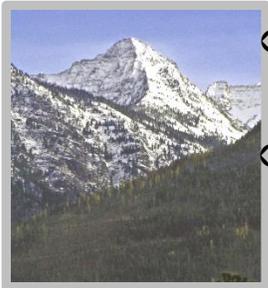
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 8:00 AM, Tuesday, January 3rd, 2012
Valid Until: Midnight, Tuesday, January 3rd, 2012
Next Update: Friday, January 5, 2012
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

**3 - Considerable : 5,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation
on steep, open terrain**

2 - Mod : below 5,500

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

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

Danger Level	3 CONSIDERABLE
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Travel in avalanche terrain use extra caution around recent wind deposits (E,NE,NW, & N aspects)
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanche possible Human triggered avalanches probable
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large avalanches in isolated areas Concern is steep, open slopes with little to no anchoring

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges – below 5,500 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 Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanches unlikely Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small avalanches in widespread 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 cool, dry air mass accompanied by light southwest winds slowly entered the region Friday PM.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern tier mountains (Cabinets, Whitefish, & Livingston) received the most precipitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Approx. .8 to 1.1 -inches of snow-water-equivalent (SWE) by midday Friday. Very light accumulations of new SWE overnight Monday. The East and West Cabinets accumulated .4 inches by 0300 hours Tuesday. Southern tier mountains (Swan, Mission, and Flathead) generally received lesser amounts by midday Friday with new accumulations up to .4 of an inch of SWE. No new by 0300 hours Tuesday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal temperatures since Friday PM. Monday transitioned into an inversion with mountain temperatures at most locations by midday Monday approaching 40 degrees. Temperatures early Tuesday morning at just below freezing
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winds have been light from southwest, however there is light snow available for transport from the Friday AM storm. In addition, as of early Tuesday morning (0300 hrs) some new snow in the East and West Cabinets for potential wind transport.

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 1-03-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turner Mountain 5952' Purcell Range on a north aspect 40' slope 16 miles north of Libby Alpha Drainage approximately 3 air miles SW of Hungry Horse Dam Site
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Observer Report Locations

Friday, 12-30-2011	Rider of snowmobile partially buried when soft slab triggered south of Doris Ridge
Saturday, 12-31-2011	Devil Creek near Snowslip south of Bear Creek
Monday, 1-03-2012	Ridge between Marion/Dickey drainages at Peak 7798

Avalanches Observed	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small soft slab avalanche was triggered by a skier above 5500' on Flatiron Mtn, in Purcells (Kootenai NF) Friday midday. This fracture line varied in depth from 10-12" and originated on an east aspect. A small soft slab partially buried a rider and almost totally buried a snow cat north of Doris Ridge at unnamed lake between Beta and Doris Lakes @ approx 6400 on a north aspect on Friday. Visibility of surrounding terrain was good with some point releases noted on solar aspects at upper elevations.
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Level of Concern		
		Most★★★	Less★★	Least ★
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last impulse to the entire region was Friday mid afternoon. Some light accumulations occurred overnight in West and East Cabinets 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind transport light from Friday to Monday, although Monday some moderate winds were blowing in Flathead Range. 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Weak interfaces associated with new storm cycle from last week and old surface with clean snappy shears o Weaker more unconsolidated layers beneath ice crusts or melt freeze layers within the mid pack. o Snowpack has gradually strengthened with the arrival of the cool/dry air mass Friday PM. 		

Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze		Not applicable
Rain-on-Snow		• Not applicable
Loose Snow	★	• Some point releases on solar aspects with upper inversions.
Other Concerns		Weather forecast for light storm loading Wednesday PM and Thursday, accompanied by 20 mph southwest winds Thursday could result in new wind transport risk

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	• Tuesday – Thursday --- another fast moving Pacific system will bring snow and gusty winds to region Wednesday PM and Thursday.
Precipitation	• 3-4" of snow can be expected at mountain locations.
Temperature	• Above freezing temperatures forecasted Wednesday and Thursday.
Wind	• Strong winds 20 mph out of the southwest will transport available new snow Thursday.

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	Avalanche risk has abated some since Friday AM with the arrival of calm, cool and dry air mass. Near surface and mid pack instabilities are keeping avalanche risk elevated at Considerable. Avalanche danger should stay at current levels unless impulse of new snow on Wednesday/Thursday exceed forecasted amounts or intensities(3-4" new snow, 20 mph SW winds
Concern	• Potential for soft snow available for transport now.
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment • Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts • Be alert that if a slope is open enough to ski or highmark currently it is very likely an established avalanche path. • Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on • Know that shallow snowpacks are notorious for producing trauma injury and death, washing victims over cliffs and into rocks.

Upcoming Events

Beginning next Tuesday, January 3rd Flathead Nat'l Forest will be hosting a public advanced avalanche awareness and safety workshop, particularly for skiers, snowboarders, snowshoers, and mountaineers:

- Four night lecture series, Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 3,5,10,&12
- Two Saturday field sessions, January 7&14
- Is a series program that builds on previous topics, participants are encouraged to attend all sessions
- Free of cost
- No registration, just show at the door

Workshop location is Kalispell

- Flathead Supervisor and Tally Lake Ranger District Office
- 650 Wolfpack Way
- On Stillwater Rd, west of Glacier High School, and just north of Montana State DNRC office
- Time 6:30 – 9:30 PM.

Flathead Nat'l Forest will be presenting a similar program for snowmobiling the last two weeks of January, 2012. Lecture dates are Mondays and Wednesdays, January 23,25,30,&February 1. The all-day

Saturday field sessions are January 28 & February 4. Lecture location and time is the same as the workshop above.