

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



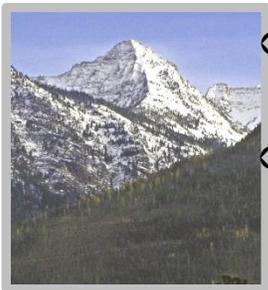
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date:	8 AM, Tuesday, January 17, 2012
Valid Until:	Midnight, Tuesday, January 17, 2012
Next Update:	Friday, January 20, 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



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary	
3 - Considerable : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain	
2 - Mod : below 5,000	

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

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

Danger Level	3 CONSIDERABLE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Travel in avalanche terrain should use extra caution with new loading and wind transport predicted to increase throughout today.
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

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges – below 5,000 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Fair
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 as new loading increases throughout the day
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 -0300 Tuesday --- • The predicted cold front did develop over our region on Saturday with up to moderate snow fall in some isolated portions of the region otherwise accumulations were light.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All recorded sites except those in the Missions and Northern Swan received within a couple of tenths either way of 1.0 inch of snow water equivalent (SWE) since Friday. Recorded sites in the Missions and the Northern Swan only received a couple of tenths of SWE over the period.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since Saturday night temperatures were below freezing dropping into the single digits and below zero on Monday at some locations.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds were a bit gusty Saturday afternoon through Monday from the W/SW with light transport.

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 1-16-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turner Mountain in the Purcell Range • Kimmerly Basin, NE of Big Mountain
Observer Report Locations	
Saturday 1-14-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marion Lake

Avalanches Observed	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recent natural avalanches were observed. Fair visibility
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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"> • Moderate amounts of new snow were delivered, with up to 1.0 inch of SWE on all Ranges, except the Missions and the Northern Swan. New moderate to heavy loading expected on Tuesday. • Cold temperatures have gradually weakened near surface layers which will become more significant with predicted loading. 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicted winds will increase from light to moderate wind speeds by Tuesday night, loading NW, N, NE and E aspects . 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buried surface hoar layers or buried ice layers are still present within the snow pack especially on shaded aspects. These persistent weak layers will be tested with new additions of storm snow. • As well, with the shallow snow pack some terrain is harboring weak decomposing faceted layers that are not typical for our region, at least, this late into the season. In the event of triggered or natural slide activity deep slabs, could pull out to the ground in the more shallow snow packs. 		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze		Not applicable		
Rain-on-Snow		Not applicable		

Loose Snow		None observed
Other Concerns		Keep in tune with current weather forecasts that still predicts moderate to heavy accumulations through Tuesday with winds increasing into moderate Tuesday night.

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong and wet westerly flow will set up over the region Tuesday and persist through Saturday. The region is expected to receive several feet of snow (4-8 feet) through the entire period. .
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The forecast is predicting 33 to 45 inches of snow from 6000 to 8000 feet elevation from Tuesday through Thursday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperatures will be cold as the cold air mass drops down from Canada today through Wednesday night. Expect warming temperatures Thursday as temps will creep into the mid twenties above 6000 feet.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods of strong winds will impact the mountains Tuesday night. Wednesday will see strong winds as well, with gusts to 50 mph on Wednesday night,

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The avalanche danger is expected to escalate above 5000' elevation by Wednesday.
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods of rapid loading accompanied by strong winds
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on

Upcoming Events

Beginning next Monday, **January 23rd** Flathead National Forest will be hosting a public advanced avalanche awareness and safety workshop, particularly for snowmobilers:

- Four night lecture series, Mondays and Wednesdays, **January 23, 25, 30, & February 1**
- Two Saturday field sessions, **January 28 & February 4**, location and time to be announced at lecture
- This is a series of lectures that builds on previous topics, participants are encouraged to attend all sessions
- Free of cost
- No registration, just show at the door on the north side of the building.
- Flathead Supervisor Office
- 650 Wolfpack Way ... On Stillwater Rd, west of Glacier High School, and just north of Montana State DNRC office
- Time for night lectures is **6:30 – 9:30 PM**