

# US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY

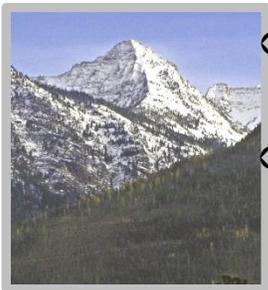
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

*Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas*

**Issue Date:** 8 AM, Tuesday, February 21, 2012  
**Valid Until:** Midnight, Tuesday, February 21, 2012  
**Next Update:** Friday, February 24, 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**

<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>3 CONSIDERABLE</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Fair
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies</li> <li>• <b>Travel in avalanche terrain should use extra caution with new loading and wind transport predicted to increase throughout today.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural avalanche <b>possible</b></li> <li>• Human triggered avalanches <b>probable</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large avalanches in isolated areas</li> </ul>

**AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION**

**All Mountain Ranges – below 5,000 ft. elevation**

<b>Danger Level</b>	<b>2 - MODERATE</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	Fair
<b>Travel Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies</li> <li>• Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features as new loading increases throughout the day</li> </ul>
<b>Likelihood of Avalanches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural avalanches <b>unlikely</b></li> <li>• Human triggered avalanches <b>possible</b></li> </ul>
<b>Avalanche Size &amp; Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small avalanches in widespread areas</li> </ul>

*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

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friday -3 AM Tuesday ---</li> <li>A cool moist air mass over the region with moderate to heavy snowfall. .</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heavy snowfall was centered in the West Cabinets and the Northern Swan with 2.1 to 3.0inches of SWE in the last 48 hours. Moderate snowfall in the rest of the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperatures were cool with lows in the upper teens to low twenties.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate southwest winds Saturday and Sunday produced isolated wind transport, and calm again Monday.</li> </ul>

### Field Observation Locations

Monday, 2-20-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turner Mountain in the Purcell Range</li> <li>Lost Johnny Drainage, SW of Hungry Horse</li> </ul>
<b>Observer Report Locations</b>	
Saturday 2-18-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dome Mountain 7500' and Upper Cedar Lake 5500' triggered hard slab releases on recent wind loaded slopes</li> <li>Skiumah Creek (see GCAC Web)</li> <li>Marion Dickey Ridge (see GCAC Web)</li> <li></li> </ul>
Sunday 2-19-12	
Monday 2-20-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marion Lake (see GCAC Web)</li> </ul>

<b>Avalanches Observed</b>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On Monday, natural avalanches were observed likely triggered by cornice failure on below the Swan Crest in Lost Johnny Drainage. Fair to poor visibility.</li> <li>On Monday, multiple (size 1) snowmobile triggered avalanches were observed on road cut banks. Burying a snowmobile and pushing others off the road.</li> <li>A call was received Monday night of a burial of a snowmobiler in the Lost Johnny drainage, location still to be pin pointed. Deceased victim was recovered Monday night, incident report to follow.</li> </ul>
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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"> <li>Moderate to heavy amounts of new snow fall is loading buried surface hoar layers. Extended Column Tests are propagating with moderate to heavy force with Q1 shears. Avalanches are being triggered by snowmobilers and skiers alike. Natural avalanches are occurring on steep open slopes throughout the region.</li> <li>Moderate to heavy snowfall is predicted through Wednesday.</li> </ul>		
Wind Loading	★★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate winds transported snow Saturday and Sunday onto northerly and easterly aspects .</li> <li>Wind gusts up to 60 mph are predicted for Tuesday night and moderate to strong winds from the west are expected to continue into Wednesday.</li> </ul>		

Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buried surface hoar layers are down 50 to 60 cms and will be further stressed with new storm loading and wind transport..</li> <li>Shallow snow pack on 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.</li> </ul>
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 predicting moderate to heavy accumulations through Wednesday with winds increasing Tuesday night through Wednesday.

#### Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant snow through Wednesday with total snow accumulations of 1 to 2 feet with snow levels climbing to 4500 feet. Potential of snow turning to rain Tuesday night.</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 to 24 inches of new snow fall predicted for the eastern portion of the region and 10 to 16 inches of snow fall in the western portion of the region. .</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperatures will be mild for the next 24 to 36 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periods of strong winds will impact the mountains Tuesday night with gusts to 60 mph. Wednesday will see moderate to strong winds from the west.</li> </ul>

#### Avalanche Outlook

<b>Trend</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The avalanche danger is expected to escalate into HIGH above 5000' elevation by Wednesday with storm loading.</li> </ul>
<b>Concern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued loading on the persistent buried weak layers.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</b></li> <li><b>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</b></li> <li><b>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</b></li> </ul>