



April 13, 2016

Greetings:

The Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center just wrapped up 26 years of operation. We started the season with the threat of a dry El Nino winter which never materialized and finished with a snowpack measuring close to 100% average. March got almost as much snow as January and February combined.

The first avalanche advisory was issued November 4th. The next day, two hunters were caught in an avalanche in the Bridger Range, the season's first human triggered slide. Daily avalanche advisories started on December 5th and ended on April 10th, a total of 138 reports. Our mountains were plagued by a weak, unstable snowpack the first half of the season. An Avalanche Warning on December 19th coincided with a snowmobiler getting caught and killed in an avalanche on Sheep Mountain outside Cooke City. Tragedy struck again one month later when a skier was killed in a slide near Cedar Mountain on January 19th. Nationally, there have been 27 avalanche fatalities: 17 non-motorized and 10 motorized.

The avalanche danger rose and fell with snowstorms. Our busy season was especially demanding in December and January when the danger was high, the snowpack tricky and our teaching load heaviest. During this time we leaned on our volunteers, both observers and field partners, along with the professional educators at the Friends of the Avalanche Center. We could not do our job without their help and we are very thankful for their support.

GNFAC INDEX

- Number of people who receive our daily avalanche advisories: 4,523
- Total number of avalanche classes and attendees: 99 and 4,690
 - Number of kids: 931
 - Number of snowmobile classes and riders: 31 and 845
- Number of YouTube videos and views this year: 77 and 100,000+
- Reported avalanche incidents: 72

- Number of people caught, buried and killed: 16, 2 and 2
- Number of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter followers: 5,502, 3,256 and 1,700
- Number of media interviews: 60
- Number of times Doug Chabot forgot his avalanche transceiver on a field day: 1
 - Witnesses: 1
- The number of times Alex Marienthal got the snowmobile stuck: too many to count
 - Number of times he got bucked off into the mud: 1
- Witnessed times Eric Knoff double heel ejected on a green, beginner ski run: 1
 - Distance his skis traveled before hitting trees: 100’.

Eric, Alex and I rely on community partnerships and volunteer efforts to help run the center. Almost 40% of our funding comes from outside the Forest Service. Friends of the Avalanche Center and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks fill in the shortfall. Businesses and individuals that support us through the Friends include: Grizzly Outfitters, Yellowstone Artic Yamaha, Yamaha Motor Corp, the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, Mountain Valley Motorsports of Cody, Mystery Ranch, Spark 1, Montana Ale Works, Community Food Coop, Cooke City Super 8, Spark R&D, and Bridger Bowl. We are thankful for all their efforts and support.

Enjoy the spring and summer. We will be back in October ready for an epic, powder choked winter.

All the best,



Doug Chabot
Director

Forest Service

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Caring for the land and serving people