

Avalanches at Lionhead

Date

Fri, 02/28/2025 - 16:05

Activity

Snowmobiling

We rode throughout most of the Lionhead area looking for and assessing a [weak layer](#) from late January. This layer produced avalanches last week that we saw. It also buried a rider last Sunday in Teepee Creek. It caught a ride yesterday in Cabin Creek.

- In most of our snowpits, the layer was gaining hardness
- In most of our snowpits, the layer was either not breaking in [stability](#) tests or was very stubborn.

We were scratching our heads because the layer seemed active but we could find any evidence that it was still a major problem, UNTIL

A rider triggered a huge avalanche in the uppermost reaches of Targhee creek. We discovered it on our way out. The best we could tell looking at their tracks was that they had no idea they triggered it, even though part of their tracks were swept away.

Also, on our way out we saw an avalanche in Airplane Bowl that had been triggered during the day today. This [slide](#) also broke on the persistent weak layers, 2-3' deep, 150' wide.

HERE'S THE DIMEMMA - On many slopes, the likelihood of triggering an avalanche on this [weak layer](#) is low. On some slopes, the likelihood of triggering one is high. Because the distribution of this problem is spotty, the damage is Moderate but that rating is deceiving.

HERE'S THE OTHER CHALLENGE - You won't see any obvious signs of unstable snow like cracking or collapsing. You probably won't see any red flags in a snow pit. There will be no warning until an avalanche happens.

TRAVEL ADVICE - We haven't been able to find a clear pattern for where these avalanches will happen and where they won't. It's a scary and tricky situation and these things are like booby traps. There are three options:

- Roll the dice and hope for the best, OR
- If getting onto steeper slopes, choose ones with a clean runout with no trees, rocks, or gullies and make sure your partners are watching you from a safe location, OR
- Ride only on slopes less than 30 degrees in steepness where most avalanches do not happen.

Wet snow - south facing slopes were getting very wet. We saw a few wet loose slides from yesterday near Targhee Peak. One south facing slope we crossed was wet for at least a foot or two into the snowpack.

Region

Lionhead Range

Location (from list)

Targhee Creek

Observer Name
Staples & Marienthal