

Weekend storm drops plenty on mountains

*From staff reports Jackson Hole Daily
January 7, 2008*

The Tetons received more than 2 feet of snow over the weekend, putting snow plows, airport crews and skiers' legs to the test.

The Bridger-Teton National Forest Avalanche Center reported 12 inches of new snow Saturday morning and 8 inches Sunday morning at the 9,300-foot Raymer snow study plot. It tallied an additional 3 to 5 inches Sunday evening.

With the heavy snow and strong winds, forecasters issued an avalanche warning that extended through at least Sunday for mountainous areas in Teton, Lincoln and Sublette counties.

The general avalanche hazard forecast for today was "considerable."

On Saturday, the Wyoming Department of Transportation triggered avalanches that crossed Highway 22 from the Twin Slides avalanche path on Teton Pass and the Cow of the Woods avalanche path in Hoback Canyon. More avalanche work was scheduled for Sunday night on Teton Pass.

Dangerous soft and hard slab avalanches up to 5 feet deep were likely to be human triggered and could release spontaneously, the avalanche center reported Sunday.

The avalanche center said light snow would continue through today and higher mountain areas would receive 4 to 5 inches by this evening. Significant snowfall is forecasted for the region Tuesday afternoon through Wednesday, according to the avalanche center.

Total precipitation was 107 percent of average in the Snake River basin, based on data from Natural Resources Conservation Service sites. The snow water equivalent was 89 percent of average as of Sunday.

Jackson Hole Airport received about a foot by Saturday morning, said Kenny Roice, who is in charge of operations at the airport.

"It was a gob," Roice said. "That was about as much as I've seen since probably about '94 — that's in one sitting. It put us to the test."

The airport had some delays and cancellations, but Roice attributed them to weather problems at other airports.

Skiers crammed onto lifts at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, which reported more than 20 inches at upper-mountain elevations in two days. The upper-mountain base was 79 inches; at mid-mountain, it was 61 inches. The mountain resort was reporting 220 inches of total snowfall at upper elevations, 166 at mid-mountain.

Grand Targhee Resort reported 9 inches Saturday, 6 inches Sunday, a 78-inch base, and 213 total inches.

With recent storms, WYDOT was reminding people that placing snow in state roadways is prohibited.

WYDOT personnel have reported people pushing snow into the traffic lanes of state highways in recent weeks.

"Shoveling snow into the roadway where it will obstruct traffic and make it dangerous to pass is illegal in Wyoming," Jon Steinke, WYDOT maintenance foreman in Lander, said in a release.

For further avalanche information, call 733-2664. To report an avalanche observation, call 739-2607 or e-mail avalanche@jacksonhole.com.