

Mount Abundance Avalanche

North of Cooke City, Montana

Gallatin National Forest

Two triggered, one caught, partially buried, injured

15 March 2014

AVALANCHE

On Saturday, March 15, a group of 14 snowmobilers from Cranbrook, Canada, were riding near Mount Abundance when two of the party triggered an avalanche high on the south face. This was the group's first time to Cooke City and the last day of their five day trip. They were skilled riders, everyone had airbags, beacons, shovels and probes and two had taken an Avalanche Skills Training Course offered by the Canadian Avalanche Center.

The south face of Abundance is a popular slope to ride. It had a few tracks on it from earlier in the day when they arrived. Two riders ascended to the top of the slope where it flattens out, turned around and began descending together. Approximately 50 feet onto the slope they triggered the slide. One rider hit the throttle and outran the slide, an impressive feat on a slope that size and steep. The other rider was knocked off his sled and taken on a violent ride downhill. Unable to pull his airbag, he came to a rest 725 vertical feet from the crown in an upright position straddling a 6" diameter tree.

One of the group was in the runout zone and accelerated away while everyone else kept an eye on the rider caught. The group got to the victim quickly and deduced he had a bi-lateral lower leg fracture with both his knees severely injured. They cut part of the tree for a splint and then drug him down to a landing zone where a life flight helicopter airlifted him to the hospital.

RESCUE

As soon as they got to the victim and assessed his injuries the group hit the SOS button on their SPOT Messenger (2:46 p.m.) as well as their Delorme InReach (2:50 p.m.). The Cooke City Search and Rescue (under jurisdiction of Park County Sheriff's Office) received a page at 3:09 p.m. Bill Whittle, owner of the Antler's Lodge and member of SAR, responded and was on the scene 17 minutes later; astonishingly fast. Bill coordinated the rescue and the patient was successfully evacuated.

GPS COORDINATES and ELEVATIONS

Victim: N45.06457 W110.01370 Elevation: 9295 feet

Crown: N45.06842 W110.01569 Elevation: 10123 feet

Toe of Debris Elevation 9260 feet

IMAGES AND VIDEO

Snowpit: <http://www.mtavalanche.com/images/14/mount-abundance-avalanche-crown>

Avalanche Crown Picture: <http://www.mtavalanche.com/images/14/avalanche-crown-mount-abundance>

Avalanche Overview: <http://www.mtavalanche.com/images/14/abundance-avalanche>

Avalanche viewed from afar: <http://www.mtavalanche.com/images/14/human-triggered-deep-slab-cooke-city-31514>

Video of investigation: <http://youtu.be/uYoYwU7gcpk>