

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/2026

— ❄ —
BTAVY.ORG



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The 2025/26 winter season brought a mix of early-season drought, unseasonable warmth with valley rain, and a stubborn mid-winter high-pressure ridge over the West. Some researchers have pointed to lingering atmospheric effects from the 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai eruption which injected massive amounts of water vapor into the stratosphere as a possible contributor to this pattern. Whatever the cause, the season’s warm, volatile weather created tricky crust and facet layers that challenged access and forecasting alike. In late December and early January, extreme wind and a buried layer of surface hoar contributed to two tragic backcountry fatalities. Our hearts go out to everyone affected, and we hope for a safe season ahead.

Despite last winter’s weather challenges, BTAC and Foundation staff continued to knock it out of the park, safely navigating the tricky snowpack while delivering free avalanche education to the public, SAR groups, and even a local mining operation.

The recreating public raised their game too, supporting the center with robust observations and generous financial support. Some of the human-triggered avalanche reports we received modeled real humility, building the kind of learning culture where we learn from others’ mistakes, not just our own. We’re grateful to everyone who shared their experiences, including close calls and accidents.

BTAC has compiled some of the oldest and most detailed snow and weather records in the country. That data serves researchers, guide services, SAR teams, and other stakeholders, while giving the recreating public real-time conditions that support good decision-making — and help point the way to good powder days. We will continue to refine our data collection through modernized infrastructure, dedicated staff effort, and support from Wyoming State Trails and local stakeholders like Snow King, JHMR, Grand Targhee, High Mtn. Heli, and WYDOT. Thank you to everyone who contributes to this work!

I hope you find this report useful. Most BTAC staff spent their off-seasons guiding, running small businesses, fighting wildfires, and taking well-earned breaks with family and friends. The first valley frost has us looking forward to another season, hopefully one with steady snowfall, deep powder, and a return to more typical winter weather.

Frank Carus
Director
Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center
US Forest Service



“ WE LEARN FROM OTHERS’ MISTAKES AND NOT JUST OUR OWN. ”

— Frank Carus,
Director

BRIDGER-TETON AVALANCHE CENTER FOUNDATION

MISSION

Founded in 2010, the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center Foundation is a nonprofit organization providing operational and programmatic funding support to the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center. Private donations, business supporters, fundraisers, and grants provide critical support to help achieve our collective goal of delivering avalanche and weather information to recreationists and professionals around the region.



To Our Community,

The Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center (BTAC) provides an essential service during the winter months, informing users about the avalanche hazard each day. As the new Executive Director of the BTAC Foundation, I am committed to supplying our Avalanche Center with funding, training, essential equipment, and infrastructure. Additionally, the BTAC Foundation serves the public by providing a variety of educational and outreach programs.

Traveling through the mountains during the winter is beautiful, and not without hazard. We ensure backcountry users are equipped with a professional avalanche hazard forecast so everyone can manage risk appropriately.

The work of the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center is made possible thanks to your generous support. Public funding keeps BTAC staffed and the website running. Private donations, business sponsors, fundraising events, partnerships, and grants all ensure our region's recreationalists and professionals can access daily avalanche and weather information via bridgertetonavalanchecenter.org.

Thank you so much for being part of the effort.
Your support makes this work possible.

Sincerely,

Liz King
Executive Director
BTAC Foundation

BTAC & FOUNDATION STAFF

All team members returned this season, with a strong new addition, **Joey Manship**, moving here from his role at the Friends of Utah Avalanche Center. **Noah McCorkel** received a well-deserved permanent USFS position.

Frank Carus, Alex Drinkard, Mike Rheam, and John Fitzgerald returned as USFS employees along with Travis Baldwin again filling the GTNP Foundation funded position.

BTAC Foundation Executive Director Dwayne Meadows took a new job in the spring. Dwayne brought significant growth and strengthened partnerships during his tenure as the first professional Executive Director and laid the groundwork for future growth. We are excited to welcome Liz King as the new Executive Director. Her long-time experience in the avalanche industry coupled with her leadership, energy and vision will help the Board to continue to advance the mission of promoting avalanche awareness and providing support to the Forest Service program.



Forecasters Joey and Travis investigating avalanche crowns.



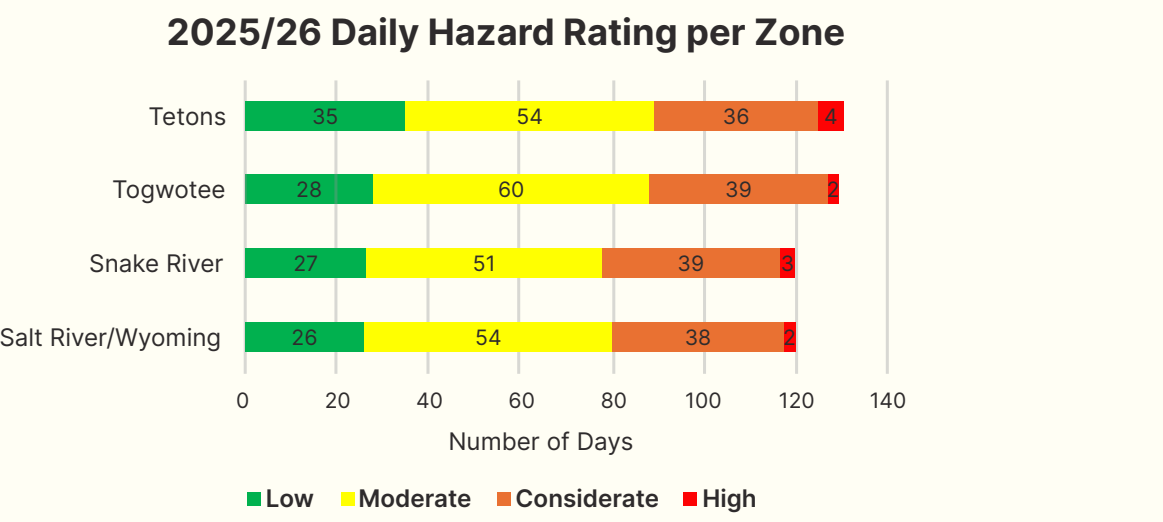
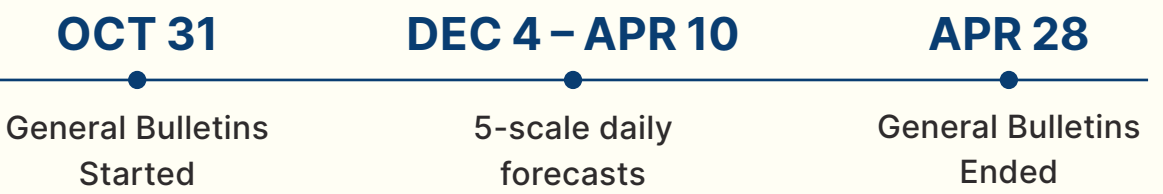
WELCOME LIZ KING

Executive Director,
BTAC Foundation

OPERATIONS

As the snow began to stack up after a dry fall, we began publishing 5-scale daily avalanche forecasts December 4th. Prior we had been intermittently issuing General Avalanche Information Bulletins since October 31st based on snow conditions.

We continued 5-scale forecasts until April 10th. We ended a week earlier than normal due to the difficult access to terrain from a historically low snowpack in the valley and record-setting temperatures at the end of March. We issued General Avalanches Information Bulletins until April 28th during several late season storms.



Difference in avalanche hazard ratings between forecast zones.

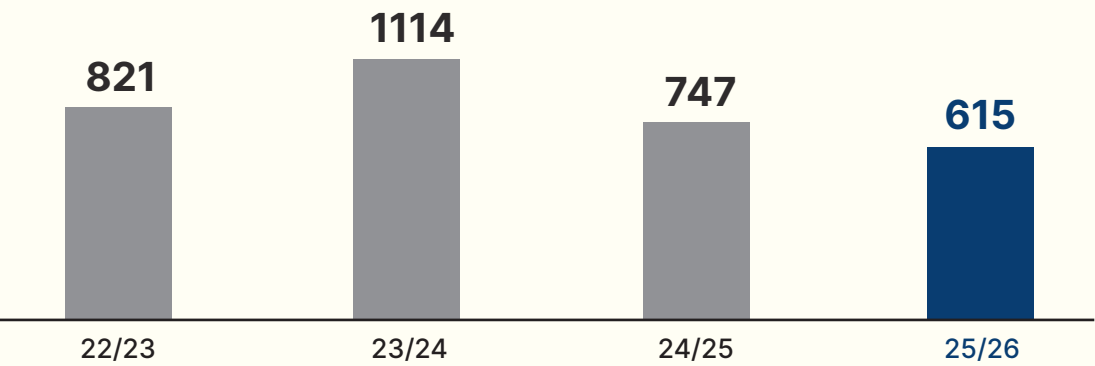


Every forecaster's favorite part of the job is getting out in the field.

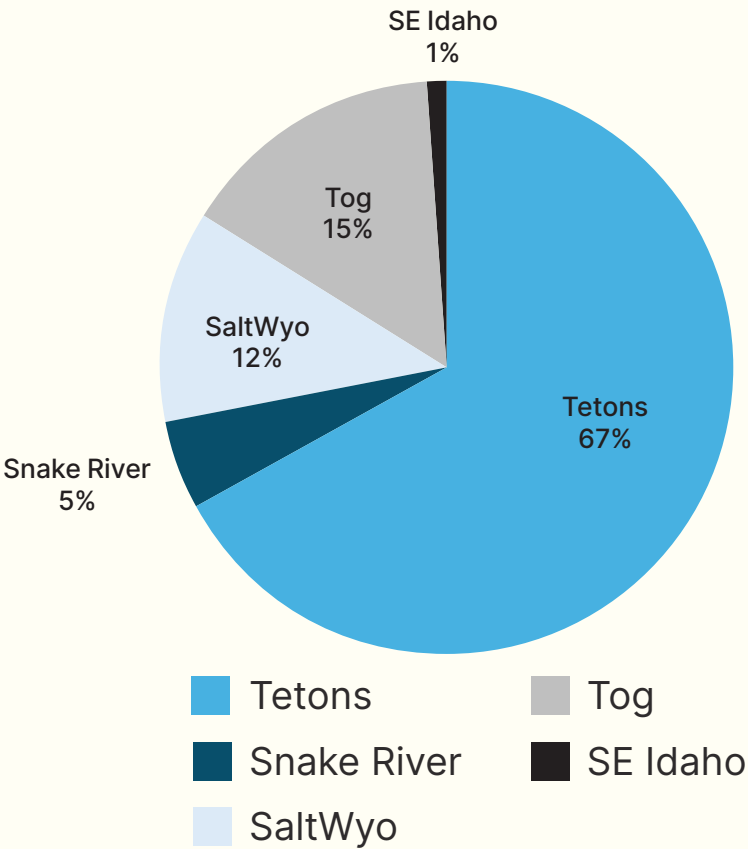
OBSERVATIONS

Total observations this season were less than the previous four years on the NAC platform. The lack of observations are attributed to multiple factors including sporadic snowfall combined with long periods of dry conditions, and a poor low elevation snowpack making access to terrain difficult. The difficult access severely impacted the Snake River, Salt River, and Wyoming Ranges. Visiting trailheads throughout the winter, it appeared that backcountry recreation was down in numbers due to the warm weather pattern and lean, low elevation snow coverage. Ski resorts, guiding organizations, and avalanche courses experienced lower numbers as well.

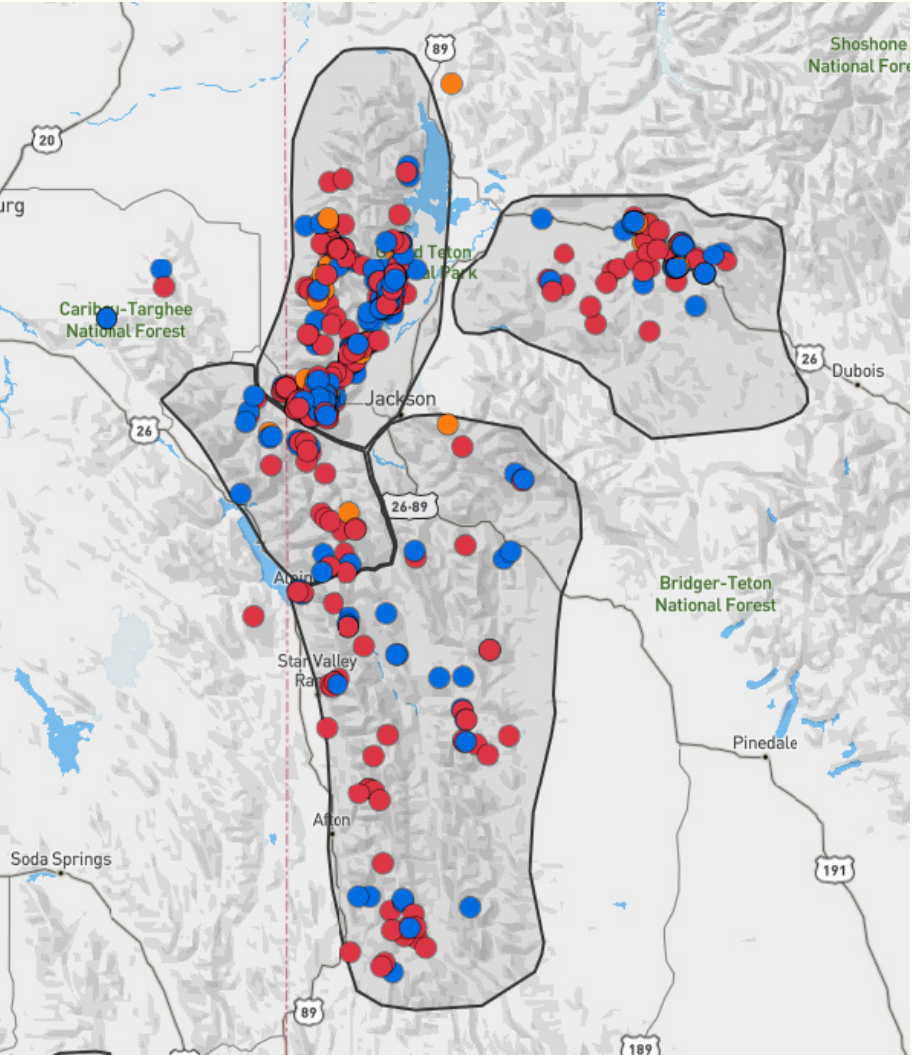
OBSERVATIONS OVER THE PAST 4 SEASONS



2025/26 Observation



Distribution of observations by forecast zones.



The distribution of observations across the entire forecast area.

The observations we did receive were extremely beneficial to the community and were valuable. Our forecast area encompasses over 4,000 square miles of terrain. Without your observations, forecasters would not be able to create forecasts with nearly as much data or specific details.



Public observation submitted anonymously of a wet loose avalanche in action.

Observations provide valuable insight for the community at large. Thank you to everyone who submitted observations. Let's get the train back on the tracks and submit more observations next season than ever before.

EDUCATION

1,000+ PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH AVALANCHE AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Avalanche awareness is critical to our mission of providing information so backcountry travelers can make informed decisions in and around avalanche terrain. We continued to focus on communities within our forecast area, while also providing awareness courses to locations across Wyoming that lack daily avalanches forecasts or education providers. Over 1,000 people participated in our avalanche awareness program this season! For the first time, we held a snowpack-talk in Alpine, WY. We hope to continue these discussions in our southern zones. Reach out if you have any ideas or collaborations to increase attendance in your community.

Thanks to funding from the WY State Trails and private donations we organized multiple 1.5 day Avalanche Awareness courses in Cody, Rock Springs, Burgess Junction, and Dubois. This was the first year we have organized courses in the Dubois and the Big Horns Mountains. Huge thanks to Beartooth Rides & Guides and Sled Wyoming for collaborating on the course in Burgess Junction and helping instruct. This course was part of an initiative to help promote the Eastern Wyoming Avalanche Information website and empower local communities to share observations and conditions.



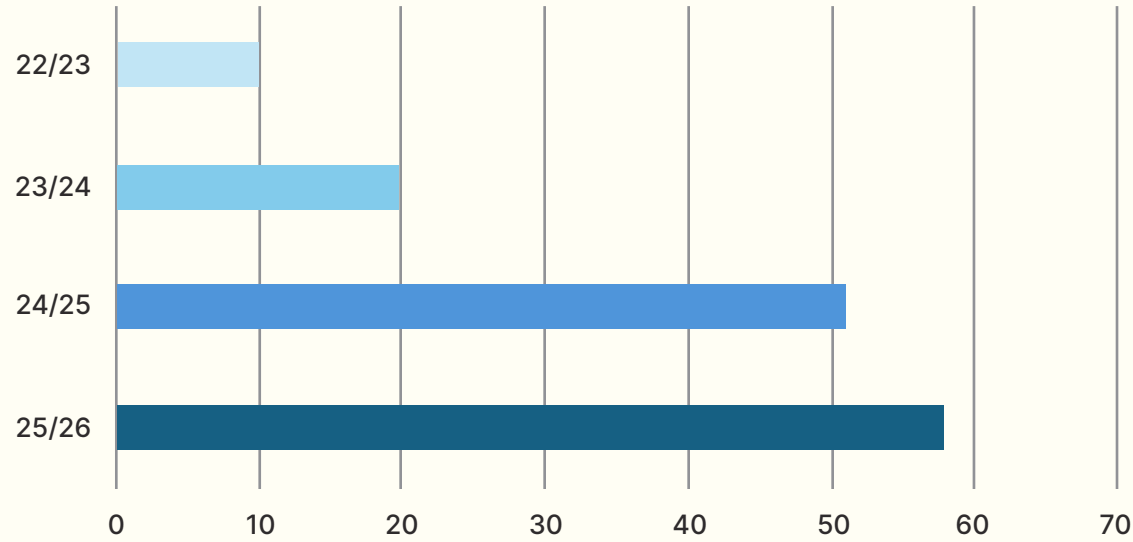
Alex Drinkard presenting at the 2025 Wyoming Snow and Avalanche Workshop.

Photo: TCSAR

EASTERN WYOMING AVALANCHE INFORMATION:

In 2022, the National Avalanche Center (with significant support from the American Avalanche Association), the BTAC and the Carbon County Sheriff's department identified a need for an avalanche information website to help educate visitors in the Sierra Madre, Snowy and Bighorn Mountain Ranges. BTAC delivers avalanche awareness programs targeting these areas regularly, in addition to programs in Cody and for riders in Southwest Wyoming. The public and, especially the Carbon County Avalanche Observation team have stepped up their game, sharing more observations and increasing the number of trainings in their areas. This season, ewyoavalanche.org saw 58 total observations this season from the Big Horn, Sierra Madre and Snowy Range. The Carbon County Avalanche Observation Team plans to begin issuing general avalanche information bulletins on a regular basis this coming winter!

EASTERN WY OBSERVATION INCREASE



Graph shows the increase in observations in Eastern WY over the last four years.

Analytics:
Nov 1-May 1

1.37 million
website views

227,000
forecast views

89,000
individual users

WEATHER STATIONS

The dramatic, intense weather we experienced this winter did some damage to our 13 weather stations. A significant rime and high wind event in December destroyed multiple wind stations. The dry January enabled these stations to get fixed relatively quickly. Another strong wind event in March wrecked more havoc on our stations. The intensity of the wind was so strong it sheared aluminum brackets completely off.

The dry period in January also allowed our team to install a wind and snow weather station in the Big Hole Mountains of Eastern ID off Relay Ridge. An avalanche forecast is not issued for this popular area on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. In recent years, observations submitted on our website in the Big Holes have increased and helped promote grassroots efforts to share backcountry conditions. Thanks to a generous donation from Teton County ID SAR and Caribou-Targhee NF for some funding, we continue to work with this and other communities to provide data that helps users make informed decisions in the mountains. All weather data is available through our website or Synoptic Data PBC.

Snow Depth by Month 25/26	Dec 1	Jan 1	Feb 1	March 1	April 1
Baird 8,900'	24"	72"	79"	106"	80"
Surprise 9,580'	29"	85"	87"	106"	80"
Chief Joseph 8,800'	21"	55"	70"	88"	80"
Raymer 9,360'	17"	67"	73"	87"	66"

Table Compares the Baird snow depths to other snow stations at similar elevations.

Last summer we moved the location of our Baird weather station and found the new location to be more representative of the Snake River Range. Our big project this summer is to install another set of weather stations in a data sparse area. We hope to ground-truth our potential sites this summer and have them operational by next winter. Stay tuned.



Baird snow station in the Snake River Range was relocated to a better site location in fall 2025.



Installing the new Relay Ridge wind station in the Big Holes Mountains of Eastern Idaho.

SNOWPACK AND AVALANCHE SUMMARY



*The very large D4 avalanche in Glory Bowl on Teton Pass during WYDOT mitigation Dec 22nd during a 6 day significant storm cycle.
Photo: WYDOT*

The 25/26 winter season was characterized by unusual, and often extreme, weather events which led to an atypical snowpack. The season got off to a slow start as October and November failed to bring any large early season storms to the region. Instead, small storms separated by periods of warm, sunny weather slowly built a shallow and relatively weak snowpack on high elevation shaded slopes. South facing terrain remained mostly bare through November. Regional Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) values were sitting around 50% of average as of December 1st.

The faucet finally turned on in early December and remained open through the first ten days of January as a series of warm and windy Pacific storms impacted the region. A total of 150 inches of snow containing 20 inches of SWE was recorded in the upper elevations of the Tetons during this time. Westerly winds were strong to extreme during the storms with speeds strong enough to damage several BTAC weather stations.

Unseasonably warm temperatures resulted in frequent rain events that reached as high as 9,500 feet, severely limited the growth of the low elevation snowpack, and formed multiple crusts that were unique for a midwinter Wyoming snowpack. Significant avalanche activity was documented during this time with 116 avalanches being reported to the BTAC. Over 30 human-triggered and natural persistent slab avalanches involving weak, early season snow were reported throughout the month on shaded slopes above 8,000 feet. These avalanches were generally small to large in size (D1-D2), with several very large (D3), and one historic (D4) avalanche triggered by explosives on Mount Glory. In addition, many small to large avalanches failing in the new snow were reported during and just after each storm. As of January 1st, upper elevation locations were sitting at or over 100% of average snowfall and SWE, while the low elevation snowpack remained abnormally thin.

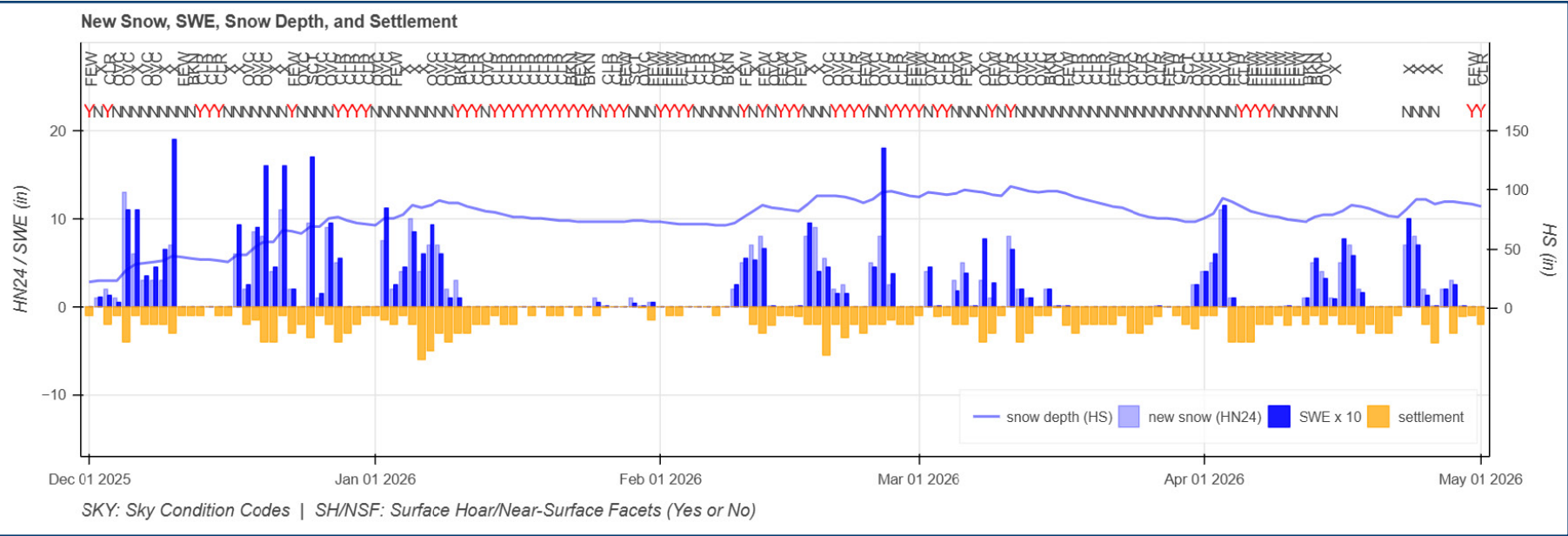
Aside from a dismal valley snowpack, the season appeared to be trending in the right direction with regard to snowfall at the beginning of January. Unfortunately, the powder train came to an abrupt halt on January 10th as extended high pressure moved in and lingered over the region for about a month. Only 5 inches of new snow were recorded between January 11th and February 8th. The dry weather gave the snowpack plenty of time to adjust to the loading from the December storms. Deeply buried persistent weak layers became unreactive and avalanche activity was minimal. While the lack of snow made for generally stable avalanche conditions in the middle of winter, it also caused snow surfaces to weaken considerably. The weakening process was most pronounced on sheltered, mid-elevation slopes where a thick layer of facets developed along with patches of preserved surface hoar.

SNOWPACK AND AVALANCHE SUMMARY



TOP LEFT:
Large surface hoar crystals that developed on middle elevation shaded aspects during the dry period in January.

BOTTOM:
Graph notes the long period of dry weather in January and early February that later formed a persistent weak layer.



Frequent Pacific storms finally returned to the mountains on February 9th and lasted through March 15th. Similar to December, the February storms were generally warm and windy given the heavy Pacific influence. Snowfall was just above average for this period, even for low elevation areas. While the new snow was certainly welcome, it also formed a slab above the weak snow that formed in January and ushered in a period of elevated avalanche hazard. New snow and persistent slab avalanches were reported regularly during this period. Avalanche activity peaked notably in size and frequency on February 24th and 25th when heavy snowfall accompanied by extreme wind overloaded the snowpack. 53 large to very large avalanches (D2-D3) were reported over this two day period with the highest concentration of persistent slabs occurring in the Snake River, Salt River, and Wyoming Ranges. Avalanche activity tapered off in early March as the snowpack adjusted and smaller storms impacted the region.

LEFT: A large D3 avalanche during the Feb 24-25th avalanche cycle. Over 100 avalanches were seen by High Mountain Heli across the Snake, Salt River, and Wyoming ranges varying from D1-3. Photo: High Mountain Heli

SNOWPACK AND AVALANCHE SUMMARY

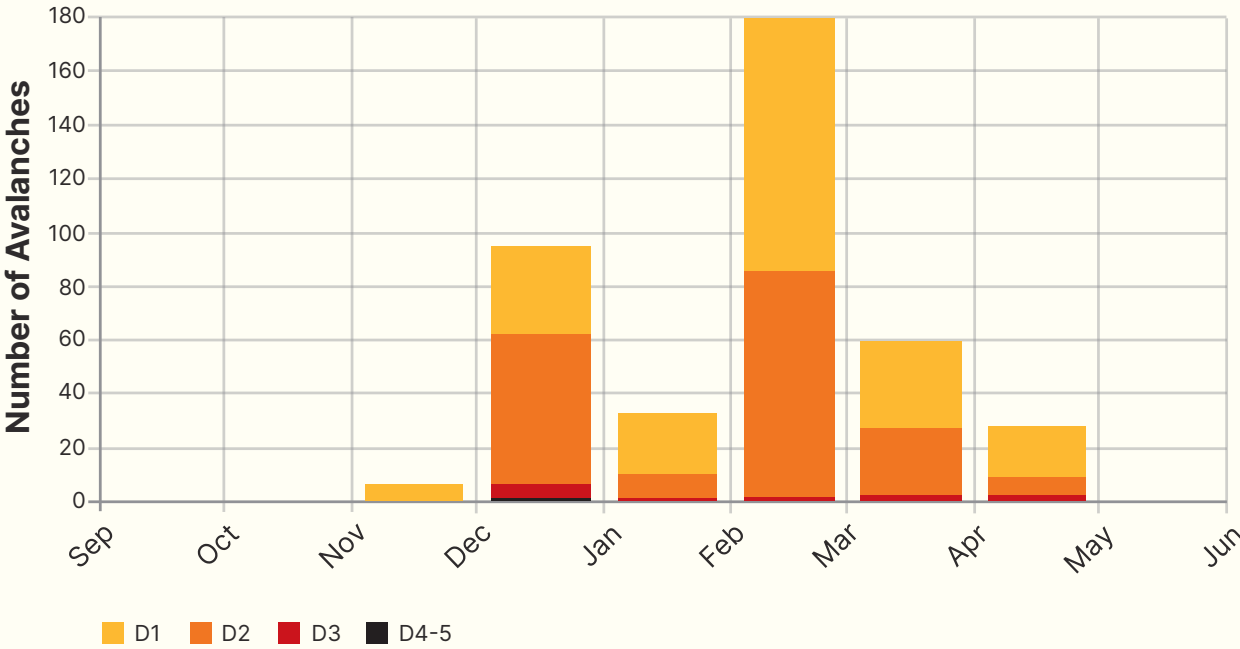


A skier-triggered avalanche on Powder 8s in the JHMR sidecountry April 4th during a late season storm. Numerous new snow avalanches were triggered on this day rated as Considerable danger. Photo: JHMR Patrollers

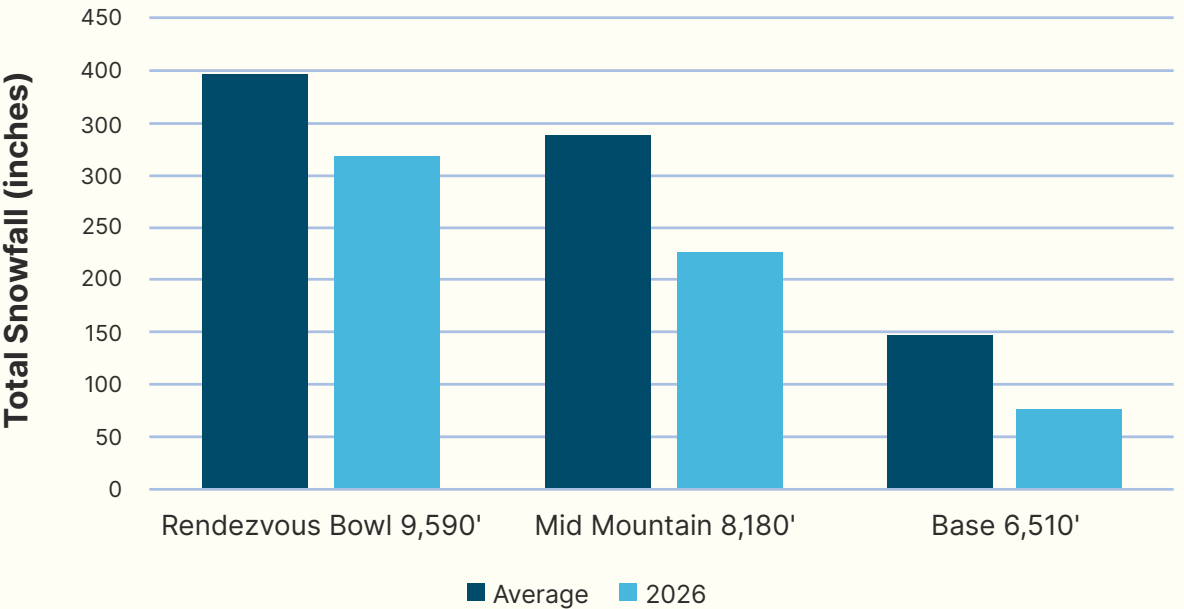
All said and done, the upper elevations ended the season with 70-80% of average snowfall and SWE. The 25/26 season had the honor of having the worst low elevation snowpack in 51 years of record keeping at JHMR, receiving only 50% of average snowfall. Every season presents unique challenges from a forecasting perspective and this season was no exception. Forecasting often took place in the extremes, with rain, sustained wind, prolonged drought, and early heatwaves making for engaging avalanche conditions. Although we are not hoping for a repeat of this season anytime soon, the challenges and lessons learned were valuable and will hopefully contribute to better forecasting in the upcoming seasons.

TOP RIGHT:
The distribution of avalanches by D size chronologically throughout the winter.

BOTTOM RIGHT:
Total snowfall at JHMR for each elevation band that compares last winter to the 51 year average. This 51 year data set does not extend past April 1st.



2026 vs 51 Year Average Snowfall



NEAR MISSES, INCIDENTS, & ACCIDENTS

Reviewing close calls and avalanche events provides insightful information into how avalanche characteristics and human factors are correlated. Our goal is to not form judgements on any events reported to BTAC. We understand that people make mistakes, and learn as an outcome. By analyzing these events we hope to bring awareness and education to improve backcountry decision-making. We want to create a culture shift within the community to be able to share these events and outcomes in order to provide lessons learned.



A skier triggered an avalanche in the Targhee sidecountry on April 4th. Photo: Dan Powers

Last season we received 161 reports of human triggered avalanches compared to 131 in 2024/25 and 123 in 2023/24. All the avalanches that reported human impacts occurred on days that we issued Moderate or Considerable danger. These avalanches varied from storm/wind slabs (1/7), persistent slabs (4) and wet slabs (2). April 4th was a notable day with numerous close calls and avalanches triggered by humans, as two separate incidents resulting in injuries and rescue response from TCSAR and JHMR patrollers. Unfortunately, two fatalities occurred within our forecast area. Full fatality reports are available on our website. Our sincere condolences go out to the friends, family, and those affected by these events.

2025/26 AVALANCHE SEASON

399

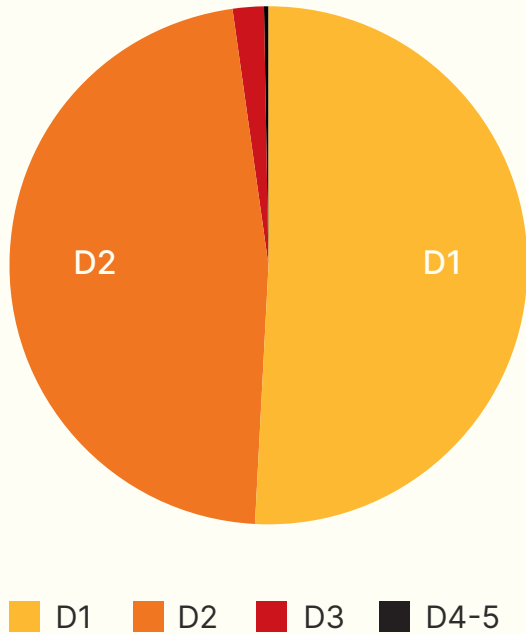
Total Avalanches

161

Human-triggered

209

Natural



The site of the LaBarge Creek avalanche fatality on Jan 11th in the southern Salt River Range.



The avalanche path where the Teton Pass Claw fatality occurred Dec 20th.

NOTABLE AVALANCHES WITH HUMAN INVOLVEMENT

DATE	ZONE/LOCATION	ASPECT/ELEVATION	OUTCOME	D SIZE	MODE OF TRAVEL	HAZARD RATING
12/20	Tetons/The Claw	N 8,500'	1 caught, buried, and killed	D2	Skiing	3 Considerable
12/28	Tetons/No Name	E 10,200'	1 caught and carried	D2	Skiing	2 Moderate
12/31	Togwotee/ Maverick Creek	NE 9300'	1 caught, partially buried	D2	Snowmobiling	3 Considerable
1/11	Salt & Wyoming/ Labarge Creek	W 8950'	1 caught, buried, and killed	D2	Snowmobiling	2 Moderate
2/27	Togwotee/Leidy	NE 9100'	1 caught and carried	D1.5	Snowmobiling	3 Considerable
3/8	Salt & Wyoming/ Prater Canyon	N 8300'	3 caught, 3 partially buried	D1.5	Snowmobiling	2 Moderate
3/20	Togowtee/Spread Creek	NE 9000'	1 caught, partially buried	D2	Snowmobiling	3 Considerable
4/4	Tetons/Rockchuck	NE 10,200'	1 caught and carried	D2	Skiing	3 Considerable
4/4	Tetons/Ski Lake	N 9500'	2 caught and carried, 1 injured	D2	Skiing	3 Considerable
4/4	Tetons/Pucker Face	E 10,300'	1 caught, carried, and injured	D2	Snowboarding	3 Considerable
4/18	Tetons/Ski Lake	N 9,500'	1 caught, carried, and injured	D1.5	Snowboarding	No rating

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

BUSINESS SPONSORS:

Summit Level	Forecaster Level	Base Level
Teton Splitfest	Steve Romeo Memorial Fund	NXT LVL
Jackson Hole Snow Devils	Atomic	Linn Ranch
Skinny Skis	Arva	South Fork Lodge
Jackson Hole Mountain Resort	Stio	Spackmans & Associates
Community Foundation of Jackson Hole	4FRNT	Avalanche Alliance
Headwall Sports	Teton Mountaineering	Holland & Hart
Jackson Hole EcoTour Adventures	Apex Real Estate	RPK3 Law
Fish Creek Excavation	Grand Teton Floor & Window Coverings	Togwotee Mountain Lodge
Grand Targhee Resort	Jackson Hole Golf & Tennis	New West KnifeWorks
Nivis	Nomad Sports	Stewart Johnson, CPA
Grand Teton National Park Foundation	Arc'teryx	American Avalanche Institute
Wyoming State Trails	Avalanche Infrastructure Management	Cobblestone Inn Victor Idaho
Ski-Doo	Kaestle	Box Y Lodge & Guest Ranch
Rexburg Motor Sports	High Mountain Heli	Enclosure Surveying
Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Board	Wilson Backcountry Sports	Wilson Window Washing
	Mammut	Off-Grid Experiences
	On X Backcountry	Jeff Greenbaum, MD
	Snow King Mountain Resort	Eric Balog
	Exum Guides	
	Bressler Insulation	
	Ortovox	



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING
AVALANCHE SAFETY IN OUR COMMUNITY.

In Memory of Nathaniel "Natty" Schneider and Nicholas Bringhurst

