



Flathead National Forest

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Contact: Teresa Wenum
406-758-5218

New Avalanche Safety Training Tool Available Avalanche Beacon Park

Flathead National Forest recently received an avalanche ‘Beacon Park’ from Glacier Country Avalanche Center (GCAC). The ‘park’ offers a special practice area for backcountry skiers, snowboarders, snowmobilers and others to learn and test their beacon search skills. GCAC secured the ‘park’ with a grant from Flathead Electric Cooperative’s Round Up for Safety program. In cooperation with the Whitefish Mountain Resort Ski Patrol, the beacon park is located at the resort on the summit of Big Mountain. The Forest Service, GCAC and the resort ski patrol are testing the new safety tool and invite area backcountry users to come try it out.

“Obtaining a beacon park for the Flathead area has been a goal of the Forest Service, GCAC and the resort for several years. We’re thrilled to have this new tool available to further promote avalanche safety,” said Recreation Forester, Becky Smith-Powell. Powell continues, “It’s important for users to know how and be effective in the use of their beacons in the event of an avalanche rescue situation where victims may be buried and timing is critical.”

The self-guided ‘park’ operates with several buried transceivers connected by wire to a central control panel. Park users can turn on one or more of the buried beacons to simulate a rescue situation with one or more buried parties. To use the park, bring your avalanche beacon and probe pole. Simple instructions to operate the unit are located near the control panel. Once users find the buried signal, they’re asked not to dig up the buried box – leaving it in place for the next participant. For assistance, users can contact the Whitefish Mountain Resort Ski Patrol at the summit patrol cabin.

Flathead National Forest and Glacier Country Avalanche Center work cooperatively to provide education and information about snow and avalanches, including clinics and courses to build skills for informed and safe recreation in the backcountry. For more information about GCAC and to view the most current avalanche advisory, visit www.glacieravalanche.org. For more information about the beacon park, contact Becky Smith-Powell at 406/758-3538.