

Date: 12/29/2019 0500 MTN

Program: Intermountain Life Flight

250 North 2370 West

Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Type: Beechcraft King Air

Tail #: 481HC

Weather: Clear. Not a factor

Team: Pilot, Flight Nurse, Flight Paramedic. No injuries reported. No patient.

Description:

A Life Flight King Air suffered damage to a landing gear door and both props and engines when it landed at the public airport in Montecello, Utah. The aircraft made the landing in the dark at about 0500 on the morning of 29 December 2019.

The pilot had checked weather and NOTAMS prior to departure from Salt Lake City and found nothing to be concerned with for the flight. Upon arrival over the airport it appeared winds were out of the north so the pilot over flew the runway before reversing course to land into what wind there was.

As he flew over the runway, he noted what appeared to be light snow on parts of the runway but could also see that the runway had been plowed. He continued the approach and touched down. As he touched down, he found that the snow on the runway was in fact drifted snow of about two feet in depth. The snow acted on the landing gear to pull the airplane to the right and off the runway, it also was deep enough that both props contacted the snow causing damage to the props and engines. The airplane was pulled off the runway by the snow, but the pilot kept enough control that it stayed upright with no further damage.

Additional Info:

No NOTAMS had been filed for the obstruction on the runway so the pilot had no way of knowing about the drifted snow and since he arrived over the airfield in the dark, he was not able to make out the depth of the drifted snow. When enough light was available to further explore the airfield, it was found that the runway had been plowed following a storm about four days prior but blowing wind had drifted snow over the runway that could not be seen from the air on approach.

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During the investigation into the incident the FAA visited Life Flight and a discussion was had about what else the pilot could have done to prevent the damage to the aircraft. Nothing was identified that could have been done short of having someone at the airport to see first-hand the condition of the runway. The airport is not a towered airport and the airport manager had not visited the runway since it had been plowed days earlier. This was a case of the system letting down the pilot since he checked everything that was available to him to find out about conditions at the airport.

In the future Life Flight pilots will still check all NOTAMS and weather for non-monitored airports but will also attempt to have Law Enforcement drive to the airport to have "eyes on" the runway to be another check for safety.

Source: Mike Ovard, Aviation Safety Officer

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