
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: TOWN OF LA POINTE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: MICHAEL DALZELL – AIRPORT MANAGER
SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT
DATE: 29 JULY 2012
CC: TOWN OF LA POINTE CLERK

On July 1 a single engine Piper Comanche aborted take-off at about 4:00pm. On board were 5 passengers and the commercial pilot. The passengers, all from Fargo, ND came to Madeline Island for some kayaking. They were returning to Fargo Sunday afternoon. The temperature at the time was 78 degrees and winds light and variable. The aircraft was over gross weight and the density altitude at 2370' msl. (A higher than standard density altitude means the engine develops less power and the wings generate less lift than normal.) With this combination of factors the pilot could see, once he began to rotate (i.e. lift the nose to begin his climb) that he would not clear the trees off the end of rwy 4. Being only a few feet above the ground, he aborted the takeoff he tried to land in the cleared easement area across Big Bay road. The nose gear collapsed and when the left main gear failed, the plane spun around 180° and came to a stop. Our ambulance service checked out all 5 passengers and the pilot. There were no injuries.

I located the aircraft owner in Fargo, who had rented the plane to the pilot, and informed him of the incident. He called me back five more times that evening asking about the condition of the aircraft and whether we could tow it back to the airport. I explained that this would not be possible as the landing gear had collapsed.

I called the Town Hall to let everyone know, including law enforcement and the fire department, that the aircraft was not to be tampered with or moved until officials of the FAA's local FSDO (Flight Standards District Office) office in Milwaukee could get here and do their assessment. The earliest they could get here was Thursday the 5th because of the holiday. Wayne Just of the FAA was here for 4 hours on Thursday. His preliminary finding was that, based on the observed damage, this was still an "incident" rather than an accident. However, after the crew from Fargo disassembled the aircraft and loaded it to return to Fargo on Friday, they observed additional damage to the wing spars increasing the value of the damage probably raising this event to an "accident" for the FAA purposes. I will have more information when the FAA publishes its official report. The aircraft may be salvageable.

Respectfully,