

an e-mail sent out to pilots' groups:

September, 2001

In the interest of maintaining legitimate uses of the backcountry airstrips in the west we have been trying to keep track of and document the uses of the backcountry airstrips in a time of emergency. We had a second hand report of just such a use earlier this month. We'd like to document it and are asking for help in doing so. If anyone is familiar with the following story, please let us know. (The reporter was Terry Miles, an employee of Minute Man Aviation in Missoula, MT. He'd fueled a plane for one of the women's fathers who had flown into Idaho to get the women or check on the plane. The father relayed the story to Terry and he told me (Dan Lilja) of the incident a few days later.)

The reporter stated that a woman from Billings and her sister were over central Idaho a week or two ago in a Cessna 150 at high altitude. The oil filler neck on the engine cracked and allowed the engine oil to leak out and the engine then seized. Faced with an engine loss over rugged mountains they spotted the Lower Loon airstrip in Idaho and were able to make a very successful dead-stick landing in the C-150 on that airstrip.

We'd like to be able to substantiate that report. If you know more please contact:

Good Morning, Montana Pilots Association,

The emergency landing you describe was reported to me by a local pilot at our airport. It reportedly occurred at Upper Loon Creek, not Lower Loon Creek. Mel Rosma is a long-time backcountry pilot from Skypark Airport in Woods Cross, Utah, and was camping at Upper Loon Creek shortly after the incident. Mel reported to me that the airplane was still there as of a few weeks ago. Mel said the propeller was frozen solid. Reportedly, Bob Plumber of Plumber Aviation in Challis was bringing an engine in to fly the airplane out before winter. (There is a road to Upper loon Creek.)

Mel reported that the Cessna 150 suffered a total engine failure at about 11,000 feet near the strip. According to Mel, the Forest Ranger at Upper Loon Creek witnessed the approach. The Ranger said he believed they first attempted to land downstream, but were high and fast. The airplane then turned around and landed upstream, executing a perfect touch down and roll out. Mel thought the pilots were from Montana. Mel's phone number is (801) 292-4987. You might also reach him at (801) 294-9155.

Steve Durtschi, (801) 292-9372