

Pilot escapes serious injury in Sisters Airstrip crash

by Cheryl McDermott

A 53-year old pilot walked away with only cuts and scrapes after he crashed his single-engine plane into a tree when he aborted landing at the Sisters airstrip during the final stages of the maneuver in an attempt to avoid a person he thought was standing too close to the runway, deputies reported.

Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's deputies and personnel with Sisters-Camp Sherman Rural Fire Protective District were called to the airstrip on Barkley Road to the report of a plane crashing on the north end of the runway, Deputy Merlin Toney and Lt. Erik Utter wrote in a news release.

Arriving personnel found a 1961 Cessna Skyhawk 172-B crashed about 150-feet from the east edge of the runway, and learned that the pilot and sole occupant, Thomas James Barrier III, was able to climb out of the wreckage on his own. Barrier was checked by paramedics on scene, found to have only minor cuts and scrapes, and released.

According to the deputies, Barrier was in the final stages of landing following his flight from Tillamook to Sisters when he saw a person standing on a taxi-way leading to the main runway. In Barrier's opinion, it was unsafe to land and he powered up in an attempt to circle around for another try at landing.

When the plane "nosed up", a crosswind blew him to the right and into one of the trees that parallel the runway, Toney and Utter said. The plane crashed after striking the tree, but landed right-side-up and did not catch fire.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) were notified, and will be continuing the investigation.

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