

Fuel problem forces pilot to land in Lee field, avoids injury

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LEE — Ron Blackadar didn't lose his cool when he was forced to safely land his plane in a farm field Sunday.

"The first thing a pilot does is fly the airplane," said the 68-year-old resident of Peabody, Mass., who was flying home from the Lakes Region with his wife, Louise.

"You pick out a field, and you commit to the field and you land at the field. You don't change your mind halfway through. You set up for your landing and you do the best you can," he said. "You have to have faith. There's nothing else you can do."

Blackadar noticed his 1965 Aircoupe was malfunctioning at around 5:45 p.m. "We had a fuel starvation problem," he said. "We had plenty of fuel on board, but I think the fuel pump quit."

Blackadar said he was hoping to land the plane 10 miles away, at Pease Air Force Base. But he said he couldn't take the risk and keep flying.

"We just had to pick out the closest field, and this was it," he said after meeting with emergency responders. "It turned out to be a good choice."

The farm field offered the necessary space for a successful emergency landing, Blackadar said. He said he was able to keep the engine going by using the primer used for starting the plane. After landing, he said, he coasted the plane for about 500 feet before stopping.

Lee Fire Lt. Bruce Morse said no one was injured during the landing and the plane did not sustain any damage.

"If it would run he'd try to fly it out of here, probably," Morse said.

Blackadar, a mechanic, said he has held a pilot's license for 25 years and this was the first time he was forced to attempt an emergency landing.

He said he trained for flying at Hampton Air Field, where "they train their pilots right for landing on grass fields."

Lee Fire & Rescue, police and Madbury Fire responded to the landing.

Morse said his crews waited to hear from the Federal Aviation Administration before moving the plane to a secure area on the farm for the night.

Crews moved the plane with help from the farm staff around 7:30 p.m.



EJ Herson/Staff photographer Fire officials stand by a 1965 Aircoupe single-engine plane that made an emergency landing in Lee on Sunday.

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Blackadar said a friend would be coming up from Massachusetts to bring him and Louise back to Peabody.

"I hope you had fun," Blackadar joked to Lee fire personnel as they departed the scene around 8 p.m.



O'Donnell/Democrat photo Lee fire personnel move a 1965 Aircoupe single-engine plane that made an emergency landing in a farm field Sunday evening.

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