

Update: Pilot describes York Co. emergency landing

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Published 8:04 p.m. ET March 23, 2017 | Updated 1 hour ago



(Photo: Chris Dunn, York Daily Record)

A pilot landed his single-engine Cessna plane in an agricultural field in Codorus Township Thursday evening.

The pilot, Craig McDonald, of Columbia, Maryland, took off from Lancaster Airport around 6 p.m. for a 40-minute flight to Carroll County Regional Airport, where his Cessna 162 sits in a hangar.

A friend of McDonald's, Mike Bullock, also of Maryland, flew McDonald to Lancaster where the navigation system of his plane was being worked on. The pair then took off separately for the flight back to Maryland.

McDonald was about 12 minutes from his destination when he started getting indications that he was losing power, even though he had a nearly full tank of gas.

"It would be no different if you're on the highway, you run out of gas and you know you need to pull over," McDonald said.

McDonald knew he had to perform an emergency landing so he started broadcasting over an emergency frequency on the radio, giving as much information about his plane and location.

Bullock was about a quarter mile away, in his own plane, close enough to see and make sure his friend was OK. He took a photo of McDonald's plane at about 3,200 feet in the air before McDonald started navigating his way down to the ground.



While piloting his own plane, Mike Bullock of Glyndon, Md., took this photo of friend Craig McDonald's Cessna 162 in the air shortly before McDonald was forced to make an emergency landing in a Codorus Township field Thursday, March 23, 2017. "This was a perfect emergency landing," McDonald said after his Cessna 162 had engine-related problems while he was flying from Lancaster Airport in Lancaster County to Carroll County Regional Airport in Westminster, Md. McDonald reported no injuries and said he would have a mechanic look at the plane the following morning. (Photo: Courtesy of Mike Bullock)

McDonald said he was scanning below, keeping an eye out for a clear place to land, free of power lines and thick brush.

He finally landed in a large field at the intersection of Sticks and Mummert roads. The field appeared to be used for growing food, but it wasn't clear which kind.

At least three 911 calls were placed around 6:46 p.m. in connection with the emergency landing. There were no injuries, but fire crews were dispatched to investigate.

By 7:50 p.m., McDonald stood in the field alone, on his phone and waiting for Bullock to arrive. He said he's been a pilot for 13 years. He said responding fire crews arrived to make sure he was OK and an area resident checked on him.



Mike Bullock of Glyndon, Md., helps stake down friend Craig McDonald's Cessna 162 in the Codorus Township field where McDonald landed the plane earlier Thursday, March 23, 2017. "This was a perfect emergency landing," McDonald said after his Cessna 162 had engine-related problems while he was flying from Lancaster Airport in Lancaster County to Carroll County Regional Airport in Westminster, Md. McDonald reported no injuries and said he would have a mechanic look at the plane the following morning. (Photo: Chris Dunn, York Daily Record)

He also received a call from the Federal Aviation Administration, which confirmed in a statement to the York Daily Record that the crash occurred and said that the plane had reportedly experienced an engine-related problem.

Bullock drove his car to the field after landing in Carroll County. The two tied the plane down for the night.

McDonald said he'd be calling an aviation mechanic to check what went wrong with the plane. He said the plane still starts and expects to be able to fly out on Friday.

"For Craig to land this thing and walk away from it, you can't ask for a better ending than that," Bullock said.

McDonald said this is the type of landing pilots learn about and practice for.

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Craig McDonald's Cessna 162 sits in a Codorus Township field Thursday, March 23, 2017. "This was a perfect emergency landing," McDonald said after his Cessna 162 had engine-related problems while he was flying from Lancaster Airport in Lancaster County to Carroll County Regional Airport in Westminster, Md. McDonald reported no injuries and said he would have a mechanic look at the plane the following morning. (Photo: Chris Dunn, York Daily Record)

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