

Airgo plane makes crash landing at MTV

*No one injured during
emergency incident*

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MOUNT VERNON — A small aircraft being used for flight training was forced to make an emergency landing at Mount Vernon Outland Airport Saturday evening after the front landing gear failed to fully deploy.

The Piper PA-44 airplane was being piloted by an Airgo flight instructor and there were two Airgo students who were also on board. Their names have not been released by authorities. No one was injured in the incident.

"Everyone came together Saturday night and worked in a team effort to help and assist this pilot," said Mount Vernon Fire Chief Kevin Sargent. "It's always nice to work well as a team to mitigate a situation and make it the best outcome as possible."

Airgo trains students from China Southern Airlines. Airgo's main office and fixed base operation is located in Centralia but the agency has satellite bases in Mount Vernon, Marion and is opening one in Glendale.

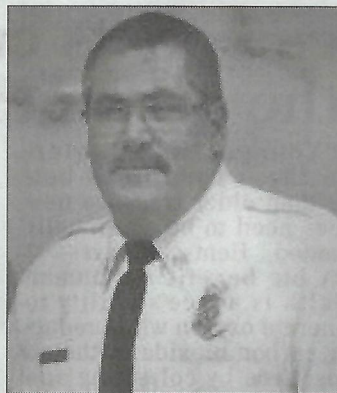
Originally, the airplane in question was going to land Saturday at Centralia Municipal Airport. However, at around 7:45 p.m. Saturday, the Mount Vernon Fire Department was notified of an inbound aircraft emergency that was diverting from Centralia Airport to Mount Vernon Outland Airport for an emergency landing with three people on board, states an MVFD news release.

"They diverted to Mount Vernon at the request of the airport in Centralia and the fire chief in Centralia because we have our aircraft rescue firefighting trained personnel," Sargent said.

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Kevin Sargent



John Lynch



Chris Collins

Plane:

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Centralia Fire Chief John Lynch said it was determined that Mount Vernon would be the safest place to attempt a landing.

"Our guys have some aircraft training but Mount Vernon has a crash rescue team," Lynch said. "Also, Mount Vernon has a wider runway so we determined with the fuel they had, it was safer for them to try the landing at Mount Vernon."

Emergency officials learned that the plane's nose landing gear had not fully deployed. Responding to the Mount Vernon Airport was MVFD Crash Rescue 14, along with three other engines, a tender from Jefferson Fire Protection District, Littons Ambulance, the Mount Vernon Police Department, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Air-Evac and Mount Vernon Airport Authority personnel.

After a low level flyover, it was determined that the front landing gear was not fully deployed. The plane then circled the airport for a period of time so that it could burn off much of its fuel. This is done so that any sort of crash would not result in as much fire or damage, Sargent said.

The pilot of the aircraft then did what was called a controlled crash or emergency landing, sliding to a stop on the runway with no injuries, Sargent said. MVFD Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting personnel were at the aircraft within seconds of it coming to a stop to help passengers and secure the plane. The Airgo instructor was piloting the plane the entire time, Sargent said.

"It's a crash but it's a controlled crash," Sargent said. "The pilot did an excellent



Submitted Photo

EMERGENCY LANDING — The Mount Vernon Fire Department and other agencies responded to an incident Saturday evening where a small aircraft had to make an emergency landing at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. No injuries were reported.

job in bringing the plane down in as safe a manner as possible."

Sargent said it was not unusual for the Airgo plane to be flying at night since students have to complete hours of night training as part of the program.

The incident is currently under investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration, said Elizabeth Isham Cory from the FAA's Office of Communications.

"The investigation is open and is ongoing," Cory said. "We do not discuss open investigations. Investigations can take several weeks to complete."

Airgo officials declined to comment on the incident Monday since the FAA investigation is still ongoing. Mount Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins said the aircraft from the incident will be able to be repaired.

"Obviously, we're really excited that there were no injuries and very proud of how the team came together," Collins said. "It was an after hours emergency so that necessitated the call out list being exercised according to our airport emergency plan. Everyone knew their roles and everything worked."

According to Sargent, incidents like this help illustrate that the MVFD is an "all hazards fire department." The MVFD also gave special thanks to Jefferson Fire Protection District 1, Litton Ambulance Service, and Air-Evac 35 and 28, as well as to Waltonville Fire Protection District and Kell Fire Protection District for providing station coverage during the emergency.

Centralia Municipal Airport officials were unavailable for comment.

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