

Mount Vernon Airport impacted by snow storms 1/18/25

Airport also moves forward with new SRE building

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MOUNT VERNON — Last week's winter storms caused major disruptions throughout Jefferson County and the region, including for Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

Despite the heavy ice and snow from the two storms, however, the runways at Mount Vernon Airport were only closed for half a day on Friday, Jan. 10, said Airport Director Chris Collins. He credited the great work of the airport's maintenance team who cleared ramps, taxiways and runways.

"Our guys have been plowing snow for 10 days straight," Collins said. "We had five-eighths of an inch of ice on everything and that caused a lot of problems. Despite that, the runways were only closed for half a day. We lost half a day. That's pretty good for how bad it was."

Collins provided an update on the snowy weather impacts during Tuesday night's meeting of the Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners. He said that the main reason that both runways had to be closed last Friday was for "braking action" issues. Braking action refers to how easily an aircraft can stop after landing on a runway, online sources state.

"It wasn't so much for snow, it was for braking action on the runway," Collins said.

Collins said Wednesday that he would consider last week's consecutive snow storms to be a "40-year event." He said the last time that he remembers schools being closed for an entire



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WINTER STORMS — An Embraer EMB 545 departs a wintry Mount Vernon Outland Airport on Saturday, Jan. 11.

week due to winter weather was around 1982.

"It's a hardship for school buses and citizens to drive, when you have multiple days of that," Collins said.

Also on Tuesday, Collins updated the airport board on the project to construct a new Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) building at the airport. Currently, the SRE structure is actually three separate buildings that were built together, located right in the center of the airport's Innovation Park development site.

The original portion of the existing building was constructed in the mid-1970s, and is in poor condition. The plan, Collins said, is to remove the entire SRE building and to construct a new one at a different location on site.

"Because it's right there in our new development area and it's an eyesore," Collins said of the relocation, later adding, "That new building is going to be constructed on the perimeter access road that was paved two summers ago, west of Runway 33, inside (of) the fence."

The total budget for the new SRE building is \$709,184. About 95% of the cost is expected to be covered by federal funds from the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The state and the airport would each kick in two-and-a-half percent of the cost, meaning that the local match for Mount Vernon Airport

would be about \$17,730.

Collins said that he expects dirt work for the SRE project to start this year, but actual construction likely would not commence until next year.

BIL funding is not only helping the airport with this project, but also with purchasing a new air rescue firefighting truck. There is some uncertainty surrounding how much BIL funding will be available during the final year of the program, so it is possible that the airport could pay more than \$17,730 for the SRE building. Even so, airport officials are moving forward with the project, Collins said.

"It's a very exciting project, and we're very grateful for that Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law," Collins said. "Without it, we wouldn't be able to afford the firefighting truck or this building."

In addition Tuesday, Collins updated the airport board on two of the airport's solar energy projects. Both of them are moving forward and involve installing roof-mounted solar panels at the airport. Eventually, these projects could save the airport roughly \$40,000 a year on energy bills.

Furthermore, the airport board Tuesday approved retaining Hanson Professional Services as the airport's engineering consultant to help manage FAA and IDOT projects. The airport has worked with Hanson for many years and decided to stay with them.