



Grass Roots Flyer October 2018



Tornado Damages Stanton Airfield!:

The Storm (9/20/18 ~6:50 – 6:55 pm):

Thursday, Sept. 20th was a very normal early fall day at SYN with weather alerts posted for possible storms during the evening hours. At 5:00 pm that evening, Jerry Rosendahl and I hosted our 3rd annual Public Safety/First Responders BBQ/meeting. I gave an update on the facility changes/activities and airport operations over the past year as well as future plans. As we were talking, storm updates were ramping up quickly on TV as well as cell phones and pagers. The Rice County Deputy departed about 6:30 to go on patrol, and Cannon Falls EMS departed about 6:35. Randolph Fire Department walked out to their trucks and departed shortly before 6:45. As we watched the approaching weather, we decided that if needed, we'd go into the parts room for safety. With a blink of an eye, the winds increased dramatically and we headed for the parts room. Toby Hanson, one of our mechanics, had left for home and turned back before reaching Northfield due to zero visibility and flying debris, arriving back at the airport in time to witness some of the damage as it was taking place. The tornado hit quickly and then was gone. (Photo above – looking west toward Stanton.)



I went to the shop door and glanced outside to see the damage. I could see downed trees and flipped glider trailers. (4 pictures top of next page taken at 7:06 pm.)



When it was safe, we walked around the site to get a first assessment of the damage. Multiple trees were down, glider trailers scattered around and damaged. Three of the out-hangars had doors caved in and the storage barn had missing cupolas and damage on 3 sides. Two vehicles had blown-out windows and were water logged. The main building had roof damage and new water leaks. It was dark soon and we went inside after making sure our neighbors were safe and sound. I spoke with a Deputy Sheriff and dispatch was informed that we were staying overnight and that all immediate residents were safe. An announcement to our newsletter distribution list was sent that evening to alert what had happened, and I asked Jay Biggs to do the same to the MSC group.

After a sleepless night we organized early Friday morning. An insurance claim was opened first thing. Jerry set up in the classroom with a hot spot, Tom Fitzhenry brought in his RV to use as a bathroom and to have hot water. He also supplied another generator. We held a brief safety meeting with all staff and volunteers to discuss the plan of attack for the initial cleanup. We had three generators running to power up most of the facility. (Friday morning pictures next pages.)





Without asking for specific help, multiple volunteers/chainsaws showed up to help. By the end of the day, the initial cleanup was completed, power was restored to the airport (Our power comes from a different source than those just west of us – our neighbors there were without power for a longer time.), the phones and well pump were back on-line and we were ready for business for Saturday. Also on Saturday the 22nd the insurance adjuster was out to meet with us. A prepared document of each building's damage assessment was presented along with approximately 200 photos. On Monday the 24th our internet service was restored. Previously the repeater was located on the top of a silo at a nearby farm. That silo was destroyed by the tornado so the repeater is now located on the top of our "control tower" here at Stanton.



As we move forward with ongoing clean up and repairs, it's important to realize how fortunate we were. There are a lot of people very close-by who are still

dealing with much worse results than we had. The National Weather Service just recently has upped the count of tornados that evening to 16. We are all safe and except for some sore muscles, just fine. I can't begin to thank enough the 32 volunteers and staff that signed in on Friday to help serve and protect our heritage here at Stanton Airfield.



(Our normal newsletter format will return next month. We felt it was important that our customers see the impact this storm had on our operation.)

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