

N180BT Ground Loop

9:06 AM CDT on Runway 12 at KMLE (Omaha Millard)

Weather: light to negligible winds (160 at 4 knots), unlimited ceiling.

Airplane: a Cessna 180 (tailwheel) aircraft with oversize bush tires.

Purpose of flight: training in the airplane for the new owner.

I made a normal, stable approach to landing and made a wheel landing, with good longitudinal control of the aircraft. However, as the tailwheel came down, the aircraft veered left and became uncontrollable, departing the runway to the left. As it slowed in the grass, the right wing dipped and struck the ground. After stopping, I taxied the aircraft onto the runway and to the ramp via a taxiway. Substantial damage was caused to the outer 25-33% of the right wing and aileron. The right side of the elevator also sustained slight damage.

I was contacted by Kelly, a supervisor on duty at the Omaha Airport Authority. He informed me that he would be contacting the FSDO about the incident.

I immediately contacted the NTSB per regulations and was put in touch with Supervisor Brian Rutt [REDACTED]. At his request (and after I initially sent them to a wrong number) I sent him photos of the aircraft via text. He informed me that: "This is substantial damage. It will be classified as an accident. I'll have an investigator assigned on Monday." That would be September 15.

The aircraft was new to the owner, and I had flown it with him from KMMV (near Portland, OR) to KMLE in Omaha on 9/10 and 9/11 with stops in Boise, ID and Scottsbluff, NE. The aircraft handled well in the air, but was somewhat difficult to handle on the ground – sluggish and heavy. The purpose of the flight was to familiarize the aircraft with the new owner and to practice ground operations as well as take off and landings. Part of the training was high speed taxiing with lifting the tailwheel without taking off which was accomplished smoothly and successfully.

On 9/6 I had received refresher training in tailwheel operations with a CFI in a Aviat Husky with bush tires. During the landing that resulted in the ground loop, I was the sole manipulator of the controls.

I can think of two things that possibly might have helped prevent the accident. 1) More positive lowering of the tailwheel; 2) use of partial flaps – the aircraft sitting on the oversize tires has an extreme angle of attack that appears to excessively blank the rudder, especially with full flaps.

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