

# Times-Republican

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## Marshalltown Aviation still operational following storm



contributed photo Storm damage at the Marshalltown Airport from Monday's derecho.

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Stephen Valbracht counts himself has a pretty lucky man.

The co-owner of Marshalltown Aviation said Thursday he is thankful the powerful derecho that swept through the state of Iowa and caused immense damage in Marshall County left himself and his employees unharmed. While there was no damage to the aircraft that fly in and out of

the airport, the site suffered a lot of damage to buildings and to the hangars which hold the aircraft, Valbracht said.

The high winds — clocked at 99 mph at the airport — sent debris everywhere and he said he was relieved to see the planes on site weren't affected.

*“To have that much debris flying around and to have nobody injured, we feel really lucky,”* Valbracht said. *“That’s a blessing.”*

It's mostly City of Marshalltown property that was damaged at the site, he pointed out, but it also left the airport without power. He added that the airport still has gasoline for planes.

*“We suffered a significant amount of damage to buildings and hangars on the property, but it was all city property,”* Valbracht said. *“We didn’t suffer any damage to aircraft.”*

The airport has backup generators, so they were able to restore some power quickly to the site. The generator power has allowed Marshalltown Aviation to continue corporate operations in and out of the airport — albeit only during daytime hours — and led Valbracht to say that apart from the damage to buildings and limited hours, corporate flights themselves are *“fully operational.”*

This has allowed the company to conduct business as close to normal as can be expected under the circumstances. Even though the damage to buildings has not hampered their ability to do business, it has made things more difficult — particularly with damage to hangars and with a lack of weather forecasting certainty due to the limits of generator power. With the limited hours, they cannot have flights going in and out at night like they would normally be able to.

They are making due, but Valbracht said he did not have a timetable for when full power would be restored or when repairs of the damaged property would be carried out.

*“We do not know when we’ll be back at 100 percent,” Valbracht said. “What it will do is take large square footage out of order for the time being, especially with the hangar doors being busted. It’s too soon to tell.”*

Going through the experience of another natural disaster so soon after the tornado of 2018 has given Valbracht appreciation for how quickly the City of Marshalltown has shown resilience and been ready to recover.

He said he has received a lot of help from the city in the early stages after the storm, assessing the damage and trying to figure out the best path forward.

*“I can’t tell you how thankful we are to have the help of the city right now,” Valbracht said. “It’s such a good group of people, every one of them, working at the city.”*

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Contact Noah Rohlfing at

[nrohlfing@timesrepublican.com](mailto:nrohlfing@timesrepublican.com).

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