

Lightning damages runway lighting system at Bolivar airport

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A lightning strike that happened on or prior to Thursday, July 1, damaged the lighting system on the taxiway and runway at the Bolivar Municipal Airport, Bolivar City Administrator Ron Mersch told the Bolivar Board of Aldermen Thursday evening.

Twenty underground transformers that are buried 18 inches beneath the ground had to be replaced. Mersch said, and nearly every light bulb was blown.

City and FostAir employees worked on Saturday, July 3, and Monday, July 5, to replace the transformers and have the system back up on July 5.

Mersch said the city has contacted its insurance company and is in the process of totaling up the cost of repairing the damage.

"We've been told more transformers could go out because they were weakened by the shock," Mersch said, "So we have purchased a backup supply."

Other airport information

Mersch gave his response to Sam Swihart's letter to the editor in the Wednesday, July 7, Bolivar Herald-Free Press.

First, Mersch said the current contract with the fixed-base operator was negotiated more than a year after the FBO took over operations at the airport. It allows for a payment of \$3,000 per month by the city to the FBO for mowing and general maintenance at the airport.

"We were either going to spend our time out there, or we could pay someone else to do the work," Mersch said.

Swihart said the airport is being used less and the only thing that has changed has been the FBO.

Mersch said other changes have happened, too, including financial collapse that resulted in less money being spent on leisure activities, a 10-year downward trend in fuel sales at the FBO, a decline in new pilot starts and a decline in the value of aircraft.

"Still, people refuse to turn lights off in hangers and store items not related to aviation," Mersch said, adding that painting and major repairs and rebuilds are being done in the hangers in violation of the city's hanger lease.