

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Cessna 172M Skyhawk, G-BIHI	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Lycoming O-320-E2D piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	1976 (Serial no: 172-66854)	
Date & Time (UTC):	18 September 2014 at 1400 hrs	
Location:	Fenland Airfield, Lincolnshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 1
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Damaged nose landing gear and propeller	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	53 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	160 hours (of which 6 were on type) Last 90 days - 4 hours Last 28 days - 1 hour	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

The pilot encountered worsening weather after takeoff and decided to curtail her flight. She joined the visual circuit in reducing visibility and flew a closer than normal approach which, combined with a light headwind on final, placed the aircraft higher on the approach than was usual. The pilot considered that a safe landing could still be achieved so continued the approach. The aircraft bounced on touchdown and the nose landing gear subsequently struck the ground prematurely and collapsed.

History of the flight

The pilot was conducting a local flight from Fenland Airfield which was expected to last about one hour. When the aircraft departed, there was a surface wind of 10 kt from 310°, approximately 5,000 m visibility with some haze, and FEW clouds at about 2,000 ft. As the aircraft flew north, the pilot encountered a lowering cloud base and worsening visibility, so decided to return to Fenland.

Runway 36 was in use, a grass runway 600 m in length. The pilot flew a downwind join but, because of the reducing visibility, flew a circuit pattern closer to the airfield than normal. This, combined with only a light headwind on final, placed the aircraft high on the final approach. Although the pilot was reluctant to execute a go-around in the deteriorating visibility, she prepared to do so.

The pilot then re-assessed the situation, believing that a safe landing could be achieved within the runway length, so continued the approach. She flared the aircraft for landing about one third of the way along the runway. The aircraft bounced and the nose landing gear subsequently struck the ground and collapsed. The pilot attributed the bounced landing to an error of judgement at the point of flare.

Comment

The worsening weather placed the pilot under pressure to make a safe landing without undue delay. Departing from the normal or familiar visual circuit pattern may have reduced her capacity to identify and deal with additional factors, such as the light headwind and high approach.

The AAIB has reported previously on 'precautionary' landings that have resulted in high and fast approaches, leading to a landing accident which is otherwise unrelated to the original problem.