

The Queen Bee Gives XOJET Her Approval

On May 23rd John Irwin and I were on standby in Burbank for about 9 hours with this King Air 200. After we returned from a quick lunch, we checked on the airplane and refilled the ice and removed the coffee pot. The airplane had been on the ground about 6 hours at this point so it had cooled down completely. There were no bees on the airplane at that time.

We both went into the FBO to do some paperwork and were called by line service approximately 20 minutes later to inform us that there were a few bees flying around our plane. The line service personnel thought we might want to close our vent windows which we had left open to help cool the cockpit. I thought to myself, “No big deal, I’ll finish this paperwork and head out in five minutes or so to close the windows and keep the ‘bees’ out of the cockpit.” Keep in mind; this was only about 25 minutes from when we had just left the plane and there were no bees to be found when we went into the FBO. To my surprise this is what we found.



I would estimate this to be about 2,000 bees on and in the left engine cowling. The picture quality is not the best because it came from my phone but these bees were about 3 inches thick and also inside the cowling.



The bees also started to congregate on the windscreen because we had a bunch inside the cockpit already through the vent windows. I think they were talking about how to get in like the rest had already done.



We weren't sure what to do next because the Burbank Fire Department had already been called and were coming down the taxiway. I figured we might just start up the engine and blow them all away but after talking to the firemen, this was about their 20th call this month for such a problem with the bees and they planned to spray down the bees with foam and that would kill them off.

So spray the foam they did. I was just thinking how expensive this bill was going to be. To my relief, the fire department said that was what our landing fees paid for. Finally, we get to see our landing fees in action!



Things are looking better and better.....



A follow-up clean rinse and we were back in business.....almost.



Don't forget about the bees in the cockpit.



John braved the bees with a dust-buster. It was amazing how strong of a grip the bees had even on a smooth surface like the windscreen. Eventually we had to switch to a larger shop vacuum plugged into a portable generator. By the time it was all over I think we counted about 37 bees in the plane that we had removed. We were relieved that we had evidently found them all because there were no surprises in-flight.



Just to be sure we were not going to have any unexpected problems with passengers on board, we decided to run the engine at idle for about 5 minutes before they arrived. Everything seemed to work fine and only a few stragglers were noted after the engine run. The whole process took about two hours and we were able to take-off on time.

We told the mechanics at home base about our adventure so they decided to take off the cowling and check for anything out of the ordinary once we returned. This was after a one hour flight from Burbank to San Francisco at 22,000 feet and then a quick hop over to Sacramento.

The pictures you are about to see are graphic in nature and may require parental guidance.....

These bees are about 4 inches thick in the bottom of the cowling and to our surprise some were still crawling around. The ones on the exhaust were melted and I think the foam spray really took care of a lot of them.





I don't think I would have believed this if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. We were given bees, but we couldn't make honey. Maybe we made you smile.

The passengers by the way had a great flight and did not experience any delays at all. I'm not sure what the delay code is for 'bees on board' anyway.

Brian Murphy