



**Australian Government**

**Australian Transport Safety Bureau**

**ATSB TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATION REPORT**

Aviation Occurrence Investigation – AO-2007-067

Final

**Runway incursion – Essendon Airport, Vic.**

**10 December 2007**

**VH-WDA**

**Cessna Aircraft Company 172N**

**VH-BTD**

**Piper Aircraft Corporation PA31**





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### Abstract

On 10 December 2007 at about 2143 Eastern Daylight-saving Time a Cessna Aircraft Company 172N (C172) registered VH-WDA entered runway 17 at Essendon Airport, Vic. without an air traffic control clearance. At that time, a Piper Aircraft Corporation PA31, registered VH-BTD, was on final approach and had been cleared to land on runway 17. The pilot queried the landing clearance with the tower controller, who observed the C172's unauthorised entry onto the runway, or runway incursion, and sent the PA31 around in order to maintain separation between the two aircraft.

The pilot of the C172 was appropriately licensed, rated and current for the conduct of the private night visual flight rules (VFR) scenic flight and had notified the tower controller from the runway 17 run-up bays that he was 'ready'. In response, the controller instructed the pilot to 'taxi forward and hold short of runway 17'. That instruction was correctly read back by the pilot. Shortly after, the aircraft crossed the holding point and entered runway 17.

The C172 pilot had 311 hours total experience with 20 hours experience under the night VFR. The pilot was completing commercial pilot training and had been operating regularly at Essendon Airport over the previous 2 months. Most of those operations were reported to have been on runways 17 and 35. The pilot advised that the airport markings, signage and lighting were more than adequate for the planned flight.

The C172 pilot could not explain or rationalise why he had entered the runway when he had acknowledged the instruction to hold short of the runway. The investigation did not identify any operational factors that may have contributed to the development of the runway incursion.

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# THE AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT SAFETY BUREAU

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The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an operationally independent multi-modal bureau within the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. ATSB investigations are independent of regulatory, operator or other external organisations.

The ATSB is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, marine and rail operations in Australia that fall within Commonwealth jurisdiction, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving Australian registered aircraft and ships. A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to fare-paying passenger operations.

The ATSB performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* and Regulations and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

## **Purpose of safety investigations**

The object of a safety investigation is to enhance safety. To reduce safety-related risk, ATSB investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

It is not the object of an investigation to determine blame or liability. However, an investigation report must include factual material of sufficient weight to support the analysis and findings. At all times the ATSB endeavours to balance the use of material that could imply adverse comment with the need to properly explain what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

## **Developing safety action**

Central to the ATSB's investigation of transport safety matters is the early identification of safety issues in the transport environment. The ATSB prefers to encourage the relevant organisation(s) to proactively initiate safety action rather than release formal recommendations. However, depending on the level of risk associated with a safety issue and the extent of corrective action undertaken by the relevant organisation, a recommendation may be issued either during or at the end of an investigation.

The ATSB has decided that when safety recommendations are issued, they will focus on clearly describing the safety issue of concern, rather than providing instructions or opinions on the method of corrective action. As with equivalent overseas organisations, the ATSB has no power to implement its recommendations. It is a matter for the body to which an ATSB recommendation is directed (for example the relevant regulator in consultation with industry) to assess the costs and benefits of any particular means of addressing a safety issue.

**About ATSB investigation reports:** How investigation reports are organised and definitions of terms used in ATSB reports, such as safety factor, contributing safety factor and safety issue, are provided on the ATSB web site [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au).

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# FACTUAL INFORMATION

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## History of the flight

On 10 December 2007 at about 2143 Eastern Daylight-saving Time<sup>1</sup> a Cessna Aircraft Company 172N (C172) registered VH-WDA entered runway 17 at Essendon Airport, Vic. without an air traffic control clearance. At that time, a Piper Aircraft Corporation PA31, registered VH-BTD, was on final approach and had been cleared to land on runway 17. The pilot queried the landing clearance with the tower controller, who observed the C172's unauthorised entry onto the runway, or runway incursion, and sent the PA31 around<sup>2</sup> in order to maintain separation between the two aircraft.

The pilot of the C172 was appropriately licensed, rated and current for the conduct of the private night visual flight rules (VFR) scenic flight and had notified the tower controller from the runway 17 run-up bays that he was 'ready'<sup>3</sup>. In response, the controller instructed the pilot to 'taxi forward and hold short of runway 17'. That instruction was correctly read back by the pilot. Shortly after, the aircraft crossed the holding point and entered runway 17.

The C172 pilot had 311 hours total experience with 20 hours experience under the night VFR. The pilot was completing commercial pilot training and had been operating regularly at Essendon Airport over the previous 2 months. Most of those operations were reported to have been on runways 17 and 35. The pilot advised that the airport markings, signage and lighting were more than adequate for the planned flight.

The C172 pilot could not explain or rationalise why he had entered the runway when he had acknowledged the instruction to hold short of the runway. The investigation did not identify any operational factors that may have contributed to the development of the runway incursion.

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1 The 24-hour clock is used in this report to describe the local time of day. Eastern Daylight-saving Time, as particular events occurred. Eastern Daylight-saving Time was Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) +11 hours.

2 Instruction from the tower controller for the pilot of the PA31 to abandon the landing and to make a fresh approach.

3 Standard pilot report when ready for departure.