



GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Reference No.

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

SI/762/1029

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Polo Flat, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. 2700 feet	Date 20.5.76	Time (Local) 1002 hours	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Pilatus PC/6B1 Series H2 'Porter'	Registration VH-SMB	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 30.10.67 to 29.10.76
Certificate of Registration issued to Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, P. O. Box 332, Cooma, New South Wales.	Operator Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, P. O. Box 332, Cooma, New South Wales.	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Radio transmitter mast
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Talbingo	Time of departure 0903 hours	Next point of intended landing Polo Flat	Purpose of flight Carriage of Passengers	Class of operation Private
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
John HOWARD	Pilot	57	Senior Commercial	3000	13 138	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Evelyn Anne HARVEY	Passenger	Fatal		Passenger	Fatal
Patricia Joy HARVEY	Passenger	Fatal			

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

There are two intersecting airstrips at Polo Flat, which is the aviation base for the operator and which is located approximately 15 kilometres north-east of Cooma Aerodrome. One of the strips is aligned north/south and the other north-west/south-east. The 2XL radio station transmitter mast, 266 feet high, is situated some 100 metres east of the southern end of the north/south strip. The base is not equipped with approved radio navigation aids and aircraft operations are required to be conducted in accordance with the Visual Flight Rules (VFR). The pilot had at one time held a Class One instrument rating but it lapsed some five years prior to the accident and had not been renewed. The aircraft was equipped and authorised only for VFR flight.

The aircraft departed Polo Flat at 0750 hours on a planned flight to Khancoban, Talbingo and return. There was dense fog at Polo Flat at this time and the aircraft took off and climbed through fog until it was in clear conditions above. At Cooma Aerodrome, fog which had existed earlier dissipated about 0715 hours and the weather at that location then remained clear. When the aircraft returned to the Polo Flat area shortly after 0930 hours, fog was still present but it was commencing to break with patches of blue sky visible from time to time. Information regarding the weather conditions was communicated to the pilot who had established radio contact with the base operations officer at Polo Flat. Shortly after the aircraft arrived in the area it was observed to make what appeared to be a landing approach into the north but when it had descended to a height of 10 to 15 feet the approach was discontinued and it climbed away. After flying for some time above the fog at a height of about 500 feet the aircraft was heard approaching from the south and the operations officer heard the pilot transmit the words 'hit the'. Shortly afterwards the sound of an impact was heard. The port wing of the aircraft had struck the radio transmitter mast 32 feet from the top and the aircraft crashed to the ground in a steep nose down attitude some 146 metres north of the mast. A fierce fire developed shortly after impact.

OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that the aircraft was operated at an unsafe height in weather conditions in which the pilot was not able to maintain the visual reference necessary to ensure adequate clearance from obstructions.

Approved for publication	 (I. M. Leslie) Delegate of the Secretary	Date 27.1.1977
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