



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Collision with terrain involving a Pietenpol Air Camper, VH-ARW

St Leonards, 9 km N of Launceston, Tasmania, 19 May 2013

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Addendum

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Collision with terrain involving a Pietenpol Air Camper, VH-ARW

What happened

On 19 May 2013 at about 1400 Eastern Standard Time,¹ the pilot of a Pietenpol Air Camper, registered VH-ARW (ARW), (Figure 1) commenced pre-flight checks in a paddock behind his home in St Leonards, about 9 km north of Launceston Airport, Tasmania. The pilot was taking a passenger on a scenic flight around Launceston.

The pilot had operated ARW from the paddock in the past, but not for a few years. Prior to landing in the paddock, a week earlier, the pilot had surveyed the area by car.

The aircraft was operating normally and became airborne at about 1427 at about 35 knots indicated airspeed. The pilot held the aircraft low, aiming to clear a fence at the end of the paddock. Nearing the fence, the pilot heard a loud noise and the nose of the aircraft jolted to the right.

The airspeed quickly decreased, as the pilot attempted to hold the wings level. After initially climbing to about 10 ft, ARW impacted the ground, breaking the landing gear. The aircraft skidded on its nose and then pitched over onto its back, breaking the propeller.

Location of operating area



Source: Google Earth

Figure 1: VH-ARW prior to the accident



Source: Aircraft owner

Both the pilot and the front seat passenger exited the aircraft without injury. On surveying the accident site, the pilot realised the aircraft's landing gear had caught the top wire of an electric fence he had not been aware of, located a short distance before the paddock's main fence.

¹ Eastern Standard Time (EST) was Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) + 10 hours.

Safety message

When not operating from a designated landing area, pilots should ensure the area is suitable. A thorough survey of the area to be used for take-off and landing should be completed prior to use.

General details

Manufacturer and model:	Amateur Built 1933 Pietenpol Air Camper	
Registration:	VH-AWR	
Type of operation:	Private	
Occurrence category:	Accident	
Primary occurrence type:	Collision with terrain	
Location:	St Leonards, 9 km N Launceston, Tasmania	
	Latitude: 41° 27.73' S	Longitude: 147° 13.33' E
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 1
Injuries:	Crew – Nil	Passengers – Nil
Damage:	Minor	

About the ATSB

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory agency. The Bureau is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences; safety data recording, analysis and research; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

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.

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

It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or determine liability. At the same time, 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.

About this report

Decisions regarding whether to conduct an investigation, and the scope of an investigation, are based on many factors, including the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited-scope, fact-gathering investigation was conducted in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.