

**AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT**

SI/782/1067

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

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

28 km north-east of Bathurst, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. 3450 feet	Date 4.12.78	Time (Local) 1630 hours approx.	Zone ESuT
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THE AIRCRAFT

Type and Model Beech C24R	Registration VH-DFX	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 31.5.77
Certificate of Registration issued to	Operator	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Bankstown	Time of departure 1544 hours	Next point of intended landing 'Coralbignie' near Trangie, NSW	Purpose of flight Travel	Class of operation Private
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THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
	Pilot	36	Private	200 approx.	200 approx.	Fatal

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
	Passenger	Fatal			

RELEVANT EVENTS

The pilot attended the Bankstown Airport Briefing Office and obtained appropriate area and terminal meteorological forecasts and reports. He submitted a flight plan at 1523 hours for a private flight overflying Katoomba and then direct to Coralbignie cruising below 5000 feet. A Sartime of 1900 hours was nominated. The forecasts indicated occasional thunderstorms in the area, broken to scattered stratus and cumulus cloud, and visibility deteriorating in rain and thunderstorms. Thunderstorms over the ranges to the west were visible from the Bankstown Briefing Office at this time and were drawn to the attention of the pilot. The pilot did not hold an instrument rating and his flight plan indicated that the flight would be conducted in accordance with the Visual Flight Rules (VFR).

The aircraft departed Bankstown at 1544 hours and the pilot established radio communication with Sydney Flight Service Unit (FSU). He subsequently reported over Katoomba at 1606 hours, below 5000 feet, and estimated time abeam Bathurst as 1632 hours. At 1616 hours he changed to the appropriate FSU frequency for the area in which the aircraft was now operating and established satisfactory communication. At 1617 hours a broken transmission was received, apparently from VH-DFX, "... up to three five zero zero but quite clear to the north." No further communications were received from the aircraft. When the pilot did not notify his arrival by the nominated Sartime, Search and Rescue alerting action was initiated. The aircraft wreckage was located by searching aircraft on the following day.

The wreckage was located on the densely timbered eastern slopes of a generally north/south mountain range, at an elevation some 450 feet below the top of the range, some 5 kilometres north of the summit of Mount Horrible (elevation 4031 feet). The accident location is some 15 kilometres north-east of the direct track from Katoomba to Coralbignie. At the time of initial impact with trees, the aircraft was on a south-westerly heading, in level flight and banked some 15 degrees to the right. Examination of the wreckage was restricted by the extent of destruction arising from impact damage and subsequent fire. No evidence was found of any defect or malfunction which may have contributed to the accident.

A meteorological post-analysis indicated that, during the afternoon of 4 December, 1978, an active cold front moved eastward over the planned track of the aircraft between Wellington and Katoomba.

6. RELEVANT EVENTS (Cont.)

The front passed Mount Horrible during the hour immediately prior to the accident and, in post-frontal precipitation, there would have been areas of cloud at the surface. Evidence of persons on the ground confirms the passage of the front and the existence of extensive low cloud enveloping the high ground in the Mount Horrible area at about the time of the accident.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that the pilot continued the flight into weather conditions in which he was not able to maintain the visual references necessary to ensure adequate terrain clearance.

Approved for
publication

L. P. Hughes

Delegate of the Secretary

Date

21. 3. 80