

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
198903764**

**Cessna 172-N**

**7 April 1989**

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**NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 198903764                      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** Cravens Peak Station (145km SSW of Boulia) QLD  
**Date:** 7 April 1989                                      **Time:** 2130  
**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	1	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	4	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Aircraft Details:** Cessna 172-N  
**Registration:** VH-SLX  
**Serial Number:** 17267635  
**Operation Type:** Charter  
**Damage Level:** Destroyed  
**Departure Point:** Bedourie QLD  
**Departure Time:** 1900  
**Destination:** Boulia QLD

**Approved for Release:** 16th February 1990

#### **Circumstances:**

During the day the pilot, who was at Boulia, had arranged to conduct a charter flight from Bedourie to Boulia. He had earlier been seen drinking beer with a friend in a hotel, but he then conducted the outward leg of the flight, arriving at Bedourie at about 1830 hours. The passengers had expected to make the flight to Boulia the next day, but the pilot was insistent that the flight would take place that evening. The reason for the pilot's decision was not known, however, Civil Aviation Regulations prohibit charter passenger operations at night in single engine aircraft. The aircraft departed at last light. At about 2045 hours an aircraft was heard overhead Cravens Peak Station, which is 115 kilometres west of the track between Bedourie and Boulia. Station lighting was turned on, and the strip was illuminated with vehicle headlights. The aircraft did not have any navigation lights illuminated and was seen to make several low passes before it then disappeared. At about 2130 hours the aircraft reappeared at Cravens Peak, and was seen flying very low, parallel to the strip. The strip was again illuminated with vehicle headlights, but the aircraft disappeared from view in a southerly direction and did not reappear. At the time, a line of active thunderstorms was visible to the north of Cravens Peak, and there was a 25 to 30 knot easterly wind at ground level. Early the next morning, the aircraft wreckage was discovered 730 metres south-south-west of the homestead. It had struck the ground during a shallow descending turn to the right. The sounds of the impact were not heard by station residents, probably due the noise of wind. The reason for the gross navigational error could not be established, but the pilot was subsequently found to have a high blood alcohol reading, which could have significantly impaired his ability to conduct the flight safely. There were no aircraft defects found which may have contributed to the development of the accident.

#### **Significant Factors:**

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. The pilot attempted an operation which was in contravention of published regulations.
2. The pilot became lost during the flight.
3. The pilot had consumed alcohol before the flight, which could have impaired his ability to conduct the flight safely.