



AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No

SI/792/1011

Publication of this report is authorized by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 263 (1)

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

40 km south of Quirindi, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. 2600 feet	Date 18.1.79	Time (Local) 1705 hours	Zone ESuT
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA32-R300	Registration VH-SVN	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 18.3.76
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 Moorabbin	Time of departure 1332 hours	Next point of intended landing Tamworth	Purpose of flight Travel	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
	Pilot	46	Private	124	368	Fatal

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

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

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

Prior to commencing the flight, the pilot attended the Moorabbin Briefing Office and was provided with appropriate route and terminal meteorological forecasts and a verbal weather briefing for a flight from Moorabbin to Tamworth and Coolangatta. The forecasts indicated clear conditions over Victoria and southern New South Wales but low cloud, isolated thunderstorms and reduced visibility in rain showers over that portion of the Moorabbin/Tamworth route beyond Wagga.

The pilot held a Class 4 instrument rating but was not qualified to fly in other than visual meteorological conditions. He submitted a flight plan which indicated that the flight would be conducted in accordance with the visual flight rules and he advised the briefing officer that he would not complete the flight if he encountered weather conditions as forecast.

During the flight, the pilot made routine position reports by radio. At 1504 hours, he reported over Wagga at 9000 feet and, at 1548 hours, Cowra at 5000 feet. When making both of these reports he requested and was given current weather information in respect of the Mudgee/Tamworth area and this information indicated that the weather to the east of the Mudgee/Tamworth track was not suitable for visual flight but it was reasonably clear to the west. Shortly after reporting at Cowra, the pilot advised "looking ahead it looks to be clearing all the time so we'll continue on track and if we strike any problem we'll most likely give you a diversion towards the west".

At 1603 hours, the pilot advised "to remain in VMC we're descending below five thousand" and, at 1628 hours, following his request, he was advised that the Tamworth weather was visibility 20 miles reducing to six miles in showers, with one okta of cumulonimbus cloud base 4000 feet and four oktas of strato-cumulus cloud base 3500 feet. At 1632 hours, he reported his position as Mudgee, below 5000 feet, and subsequently advised that he would be tracking via Quirindi and would be requesting entry to the Tamworth control zone at 3000 feet. At 1648 hours, he acknowledged an instruction to call Tamworth Tower at Quirindi and there is no record of any further transmission from the aircraft.

6. RELEVANT EVENTS (Cont'd)

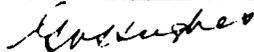
At about 1705 hours, an aircraft was observed flying under low cloud in light drizzle, on a northerly heading along a valley on the steeply rising southern slopes of the Liverpool Ranges. The aircraft appeared to enter cloud, the engine noise increased and suddenly ceased and the sound of an impact was heard. A search was commenced and the wreckage of VH-SVN was located by ground search parties on the following morning.

The aircraft had struck densely timbered sloping terrain near the head of a blind valley while on a north-westerly heading in near level flight. The accident site was some 30 kilometres east of the planned and reported track of the aircraft. Examination of the wreckage disclosed no evidence of any defect or malfunction which might have contributed to the accident. The surviving passenger recalled that, just prior to the accident, she was aware of lowering cloud and rising terrain and the aircraft appeared to enter cloud.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that, in the face of low cloud and rising terrain, the pilot persevered with the planned flight beyond the point where safe alternative action was possible.

Approved for
publication



(G. V. Hughes)
Delegate of the Secretary

Date

13.8.81