

OA2025-04207 - Occurrence Details

Occurrence

Logged date	12/4/2025
Status	Approved for release
Occurrence class	Accident
Highest injury	Minor
Occurrence date	12/4/2025
Occurrence time	17:23 AUS Eastern Standard Time
Public summary	On 4 December 2025, at 1720 local time, an Air Tractor AT-802A was preparing to conduct aerial firefighting operations from Linga Airbase, Victoria. Before departure the pilot briefly consulted electronic maps for Linga Airbase, however, did not observe that runways 17 and 19 were 2 separate runways with runway 19 commencing at the end of runway 17 rather than a single longer runway. After loading the aircraft with fire retardant, the pilot commenced taxi for runway 17, believing they were backtracking to use the entire length of runways 17 and 19. The pilot completed their take-off checks and commenced the take-off roll. The pilot reported that during the take-off run, due to the upslope on runway 17, they were unable to see the threshold of runway 19 until the aircraft had crested the rise towards the end of runway 17. Unaware of the 20° right turn, on becoming visual with runway 19, the pilot assessed the turn was too sharp to navigate and the aircraft was travelling too fast to stop and not yet fast enough to become airborne. The pilot maintained the runway 17 heading, and the aircraft overran the end of runway 17 into a field, impacting a fence, before becoming airborne. The pilot intended to release the load of fire retardant to reduce weight, however, due to their unfamiliarity with the location of the load release switch in that aircraft, instead activated the aircraft lights, before locating the correct switch and dumping the load. Images show the left-wing tip dragged along the surface of the field while the load was dumped. A witness reported the aircraft briefly became airborne with a nose high attitude and left wing down in a left turn before the left wing again contacted the ground and pulled the aircraft to the ground before coming to a stop. The impact was sufficient to liberate the engine and propeller from the aircraft which subsequently set fire to the field. The local airbase manager and 2 other state government employees attended the scene and were able to put the fire out in the vicinity of the aircraft and were then able to assist the pilot to egress the aircraft. The pilot sustained minor injuries and was admitted to Mildura hospital. The aircraft was substantially damaged. The pilot reported that they had not previously operated from

	Linga Airbase, and earlier when arriving in the circuit they joined a midfield crosswind leg for runway 01 before landing, and had not observed the angle of the adjoining runways from the air. The airbase manager reported other firefighting aircraft had been using runway 19 throughout the day. Linga Airbase runway 17 was about 660 m in length and joined the northern end of runway 19 which measured about 1,000 m in length. The aircraft was loaded with retardant to the western side of where runways 17 and 19 met. The pilot reported the wind direction during the take-off roll was a crosswind. Conditions around the time of the occurrence recorded at Hopetoun, Victoria indicated temperature of 38°C with winds gusting between 16—33 kt from the north-west. The aircraft loading log for the day of the occurrence indicated it was loaded with about 2,300 L of fire retardant. This gave the aircraft a take-off weight of about 6,900 kg, which was below the aircraft's maximum take-off weight for the conditions. The operator reported the aircraft's performance in the hot conditions required a take-off ground roll distance of about 1,000 m. Although they were an experienced agricultural pilot, they had not previously operated from that airbase. Although the pilot observed other aircraft depart using runway 19 while reloading, they assumed they were not using the entire length of the runway, and by taxiing and backtracking to the threshold of runway 17 believed they were increasing their take-off roll distance. Performance calculations indicated that due to the air temperature, weight of the aircraft and wind conditions, the aircraft would have required the full length of the longer runway 19 to become airborne.			
Property damage	Yes			
Property damage details	Fence			
Worst accident outcome	Section 47E(d)			
Defence effectiveness	Not effective			
Risk rating	Section 47E(d)			
ERC justification				
TSI reportable	Immediately reportable			
Ground injuries	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total
				0

Location

Location	81.7 km 315 degrees from Hopetoun Aerodrome
Latitude	-35.19656700
Longitude	141.72093400
State	VIC
Country	Australia

Aircraft

Registration	Section 47E(d)
Type	Aeroplane
Manufacturer	AIR TRACTOR INC
Model	AT-802
Engine type	Turboprop
Engine manufacturer	PRATT & WHITNEY CANADA
Engine model	PT6A-65R
Number of engines	1
Landing gear type	Tailwheel - Fixed
Fuel type	Kerosene
Year of manufacture	1993
Amateur built	
Maximum takeoff weight (kg)	7257
ELT Type	
ELT Fitted	Unknown
ELT Activated	

Airspace

Controlling agency	
ATS service type	
ATS position	
Airspace class	G
Airspace type	CTAF

Operation

Registration	Section 47E(d)
Operator	Section 47E(d)
Flight number	
Related runway	17
Phase of flight	Take-off
PIC status	Employee
Pilot flying role	Pilot in command
Departure aerodrome	Linga Airbase, Linga, Vic.
Destination aerodrome	
Actual landing	

Aerodrome proximity	On aerodrome
Operation type	Part 138 Aerial work operations
Operation subtype	Task specialist
Activity group	General aviation / Recreational
Activity type	Aerial work
Activity subtype	Firefighting
Flight rules	VFR
Flight conditions	VMC
Altitude type	Surface
Altitude	Exactly
Exact altitude	0
Other information	

Occurrence category

Registration	Section 47E(d)
Level 1	Operational Operational
Level 2	Terrain collisions Runway events
Level 3	Collision with terrain Runway excursion

Damage level and injuries

Registration	Section 47E(d)			
Injury level	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total
Crew	0	0	1	1
Passengers	0	0	0	
Aircraft damage level	Substantial			
Post impact fire	Yes			
Damage description	Tail section separated/destroyed, engine hot section separated, prop blades bent, wings damaged			

Weather and environment

Cloud cover	
Visibility (km)	
Light conditions	Daylight
Wind direction	
Average wind speed (kts)	
Cloud base (ft)	

Visibility reduced by	
Turbulence conditions	
Icing conditions	
Precipitation type	Nil
Precipitation intensity	Nil
QNH	
Outside temperature	
Light and variable (windspeed)	No
Maximum wind speed (gust)	
Dew point	
CAVOK	
Effective cloud ceiling	
Weather phenomena	

Safety factor

Level 1	Risk control Individual action Local condition Local condition
Level 2	Facilities / infrastructure Aircraft operation action Knowledge, skills, experience Knowledge, skills, experience
Level 3	Runway design Assessing and planning (Aircraft operation action) Other knowledge, skills, experience factors Equipment knowledge / skills

Aviation notification NA2025-22425

Notification Source	Phone – Section 47E(d)
Operator Reference Number	
Occurrence Date Time	04/12/2025 17:23
Occurrence Time Zone	AUS Eastern Standard Time
Location	Linga airbase
State	VIC
Occurrence Class	Accident

Occurrence Category Level 1	Occurrence Category Level 2	Occurrence Category Level 3
Operational	Terrain collisions	Collision with terrain
Operational	Terrain collisions	Collision with terrain

Ground - Fatal	Ground - Serious	Ground - Minor	Ground - Total
0	0	0	0

Aircraft Registration	Section 47E(d)		
Manufacturer	AIR TRACTOR INC		
Model	AT-802		
Flight Number			
Operator	Section 47E(d)		
Operation Type	Aerial firefighting		
Damage Level	Substantial		
Damage Description	Damage to left wing. Engine and prop has separated from airframe and the tail has been heavily disrupted		
Crew - Fatal	Crew - Serious	Crew - Minor	Crew - Total

Section 47E(d)

Passenger - Fatal	Passenger - Serious	Passenger - Minor	Passenger - Total
0	0	0	0

Summary

Section 47E(d)

Shortly after take-off the aircraft has clipped a fence
and crashed.

Section 47E(d)

Section 47F

Spot fires have been extinguished by local fire
service, and the pilot is being transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Section 47E(d)

Aviation notification NA2025-22427

Notification Source	Phone - Section 47E(d)
Operator Reference Number	
Occurrence Date Time	12/4/2025 5:23:00 PM
Occurrence Time Zone	AUS Eastern Standard Time
Location	Linga airbase
State	VIC
Occurrence Class	Accident

Occurrence Category Level 1	Occurrence Category Level 2	Occurrence Category Level 3
Operational	Terrain collisions	Collision with terrain

Ground - Fatal	Ground - Serious	Ground - Minor	Ground - Total
0	0	0	0

Aircraft Registration	Section 47E(d)		
Manufacturer	AIR TRACTOR INC		
Model	AT-802		
Flight Number			
Operator	Section 47E(d)		
Operation Type	Aerial firefighting		
Damage Level	Destroyed		
Damage Description	Section 47E(d)		
Crew - Fatal	Crew - Serious	Crew - Minor	Crew - Total
		Section 47E(d)	
Passenger - Fatal	Passenger - Serious	Passenger - Minor	Passenger - Total
0	0	0	0

Summary

Section 47E(d)

Aviation notification NA2025-22565

Notification Source	Web
Operator Reference Number	Section 47E(d)
Occurrence Date Time	12/4/2025 5:23:00 PM
Occurrence Time Zone	AUS Eastern Standard Time
Location	Linga Air Base 35 12S 141 43E
State	VIC
Occurrence Class	Accident

Occurrence Category Level 1	Occurrence Category Level 2	Occurrence Category Level 3
Operational	Terrain collisions	Collision with terrain

Ground - Fatal	Ground - Serious	Ground - Minor	Ground - Total
0	0	0	0

Aircraft Registration		Section 47E(d)	
Manufacturer		AIR TRACTOR INC	
Model		AT-802	
Flight Number			
Operator			
Operation Type		Part 137 Aerial application operations-Travel from a landing area to a work area and back	
Damage Level			
Damage Description		Section 47E(d)	
Crew - Fatal	Crew - Serious	Crew - Minor	Crew - Total

Section 47E(d)

Passenger - Fatal	Passenger - Serious	Passenger - Minor	Passenger - Total
0	0	0	0

Summary

Section 47E(d)

Section 22

Cx2025-39981 – Phone call from Section 47E(d)

*Communication Direction and...

Incoming phone call

▼

*Roster

Business hours notifications

▼

Communication details

⌵

*Date received

05/12/2025

09 : 45 : 52

Brisbane

▼

*Communication type

General enquiry

▼

*Last name

Section 47F

✕

*Given name

Section 47F

✕

Phone no.

Section 47F

Email

✕

Organisation

Section 47E(d)

✕

Role type

Section 47E(d)

▼

Summary

⌵

*Summary

Section 47E(d)

Cx2025-40062 – Follow-up phone call from Section 47E(d)

*Communication Direction and...

Incoming phone call

*Roster

Business hours notifications

Communication details

*Date received

05/12/2025

13

:

53

:

22

Brisbane

*Communication type

Aviation Notification follow-up

*Last name

Section 47F

✕

*Given name

Section 47F

✕

Phone no.

Section 47F

Email

✕

Organisation

Section 47E(d)

✕

Role type

Section 47E(d)

▼

Summary

*Summary

Section 47E(d)



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Runway excursion and collision with terrain involving an Air Tractor AT-802A

82 km north-west of Hopetoun, Victoria, on 4 December 2025

ATSB Transport Safety Report

Aviation Occurrence Brief

AB-2025-065

Final – 21 January 2026

AB-2025-065

Occurrence Briefs are concise reports that detail the facts surrounding a transport safety occurrence, as received in the initial notification and any follow-up enquiries. They provide an opportunity to share safety messages in the absence of an investigation. Because occurrence briefs are not investigations under the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*, the information in them is de-identified.

What happened

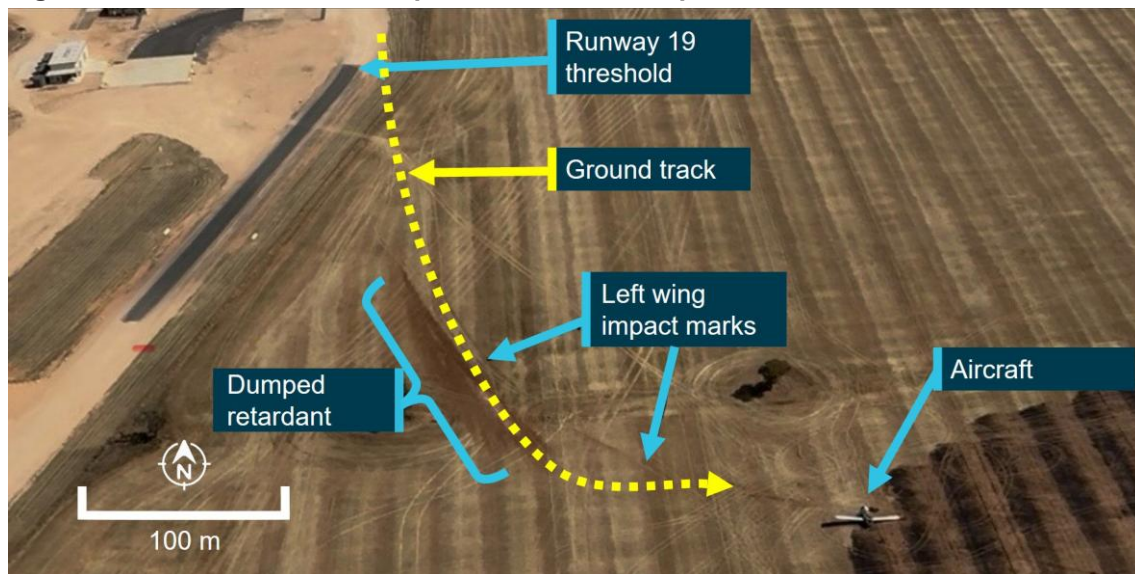
On 4 December 2025, at 1720 local time, an Air Tractor AT-802A was preparing to conduct aerial firefighting operations from Linga Airbase, Victoria. Before departure the pilot briefly consulted electronic maps for Linga Airbase, however, did not observe that runways 17 and 19 were 2 separate runways with runway 19 commencing at the end of runway 17 rather than a single longer runway (Figure 1). After loading the aircraft with fire retardant, the pilot commenced taxi for runway 17, believing they were backtracking to use the entire length of runways 17 and 19. The pilot completed their take-off checks and commenced the take-off roll.

The pilot reported that during the take-off run, due to the upslope on runway 17, they were unable to see the threshold of runway 19 until the aircraft had crested the rise towards the end of runway 17. Unaware of the 20° right turn, on becoming visual with runway 19, the pilot assessed the turn was too sharp to navigate and the aircraft was travelling too fast to stop and not yet fast enough to become airborne.

Figure 1: Linga Airbase, Victoria

* Wind direction was recorded 82 km away at Hopetoun, Victoria
Source: Google Earth, annotated by the ATSB

The pilot maintained the runway 17 heading, and the aircraft overran the end of runway 17 into a field, impacting a fence, before becoming airborne. The pilot intended to release the load of fire retardant to reduce weight, however, due to their unfamiliarity with the location of the load release switch in that aircraft, instead activated the aircraft lights, before locating the correct switch and dumping the load. Images show the left-wing tip dragged along the surface of the field while the load was dumped. A witness reported the aircraft briefly became airborne with a nose high attitude and left wing down in a left turn before the left wing again contacted the ground and pulled the aircraft to the ground before coming to a stop (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Occurrence aircraft impact marks and final position

Source: Operator, annotated by the ATSB

The impact was sufficient to liberate the engine and propeller from the aircraft which subsequently set fire to the field (Figure 3). The local airbase manager and 2 other state government employees attended the scene and were able to put the fire out in the vicinity of the aircraft and were then able to assist the pilot to egress the aircraft.

The pilot sustained minor injuries and was admitted to Mildura hospital. The aircraft was substantially damaged.

Figure 3: Occurrence aircraft

Source: Operator

The pilot reported that they had not previously operated from Linga Airbase, and earlier when arriving in the circuit they joined a midfield crosswind leg for runway 01 before landing, and had not observed the angle of the adjoining runways from the air.

The airbase manager reported other firefighting aircraft had been using runway 19 throughout the day. Linga Airbase runway 17 was about 660 m in length and joined the northern end of runway 19 which measured about 1,000 m in length. The aircraft was loaded with retardant to the western side of where runways 17 and 19 met.

The pilot reported the wind direction during the take-off roll was a crosswind. Conditions around the time of the occurrence recorded at Hopetoun, Victoria indicated temperature of 38°C with winds gusting between 16–33 kt from the north-west.

The aircraft loading log for the day of the occurrence indicated it was loaded with about 2,300 L of fire retardant. This gave the aircraft a take-off weight of about 6,900 kg, which was below the aircraft's maximum take-off weight for the conditions. The operator reported the aircraft's performance in the hot conditions required a take-off ground roll distance of about 1,000 m.

Although they were an experienced agricultural pilot, they had not previously operated from that airbase. Although the pilot observed other aircraft depart using runway 19 while reloading, they assumed they were not using the entire length of the runway, and by taxiing and backtracking to the threshold of runway 17 believed they were increasing their take-off roll distance. Performance calculations indicated that due to the air temperature, weight of the aircraft and wind conditions, the aircraft would have required the full length of the longer runway 19 to become airborne.

Safety message

The ATSB SafetyWatch highlights the broad safety concerns that come out of our investigation findings and from the occurrence data reported to us by industry. One of the safety concerns is [reducing the severity of injuries in accidents involving small aircraft](#). As a result of the aircraft's sudden stop the pilot's flight helmet was damaged in the occurrence and they suffered a laceration to their head. Therefore, it was likely the pilot's helmet prevented a more serious head injury.



Thorough pre-flight planning is essential to safe flight and is especially important when operating from unfamiliar airports. A clear understanding of the take-off distances available and runway configuration improves pilots' situational awareness, reducing the possibility of the unexpected during higher risk stages of flight such as take-off and landing.

Aerial firefighting operations are often conducted in conditions of extreme heat and wind; accurate performance calculations including take-off weight and available runway distance are essential for safe operations in challenging conditions.

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, no investigation has been conducted and the ATSB did not verify the accuracy of the information. A brief description has been written using information supplied in the notification and any follow-up information in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.

General details

Occurrence details

Date and time:	04 December 2025 – 1723 AEDT	
Occurrence class:	Accident	
Occurrence categories:	Collision with terrain, Runway excursion	
Location:	81.7 km 315 degrees from Hopetoun Aerodrome	
	Latitude: 35.1966° S	Longitude: 141.7209° E

Aircraft details

Manufacturer and model:	AIR TRACTOR INC AT-802	
Type of operation:	Part 138 Aerial work operations-Task specialist	
Activity:	General aviation / Recreational-Aerial work-Firefighting	
Departure:	Linga Airbase, Linga, Victoria	
Destination:	Linga Airbase, Linga, Victoria	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 0
Injuries:	Crew – 1 minor	Passengers – 0
Aircraft damage:	Substantial	

Publishing information

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