

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA-BUREAU OF AIR SAFETY INVESTIGATION AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

REFERENCE NO.
SI/812/1036

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Barrington Tops area, N.S.W.		Elevation:	Unknown
Date: 9.8.81	Time: 1940 hours	Zone:	EST

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model:	Cessna 210M	Registration:	VH-MDX
Certificate of Airworthiness:		Issued on 3.2.78	
Certificate of Registration Issued to: Canopy Manufacturing Pty Ltd, Corner Shirlow and Garden Streets, Marrickville, N.S.W.		Operator: Canopy Manufacturing Pty Ltd, Corner Shirlow and Garden Street Marrickville, N.S.W.	
Degree of Damage to Aircraft: Presumed destroyed		Other Property Damaged: Nil reported	
Defects discovered: Aircraft not located			

3. THE FLIGHT

Departure Point: Coolangatta	Time of departure: 1701 hours
Destination: Bankstown	
Purpose of flight: Travel	Class of Operation: Private

4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of Licence	Hours on Type	Total Hours	Degree of Injury
Section 22	Pilot	Section 22	Senior Commercial	28	3412	Presume fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (ALL PASSENGERS AND PERSONS INJURED ON GROUND)

Name	Status	Degree of Injury
Section 22	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT (CONT)

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6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The aircraft was engaged in a flight from Proserpine to Bankstown with an intermediate stop at Coolangatta. On arrival at Coolangatta the aircraft was refuelled and the pilot attended the Briefing Office, where he was provided with copies of the relevant weather forecasts for the remaining part of the flight. These forecasts indicated a strong west-southwesterly airflow over northern New South Wales, with considerable low level cloud to the west of the mountains but only scattered strato-cumulus or cumulus up to 6000 feet to the east and over the coast. The freezing level was expected to be between 4000 and 7000 feet above mean sea level, and moderate icing was forecast in cloud above that level. A SIGMET (forecast of significant weather which may affect aircraft safety) was current, indicating occasional severe turbulence existed below 12,000 feet to the east of the mountains.

The pilot held a current Class 3 Instrument Rating, which entitled him to make the flight under the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). The aircraft was also approved for IFR operations, but not for flight in known or forecast icing conditions, as it was not equipped with suitable airframe de-icing equipment. The pilot elected to conduct the flight in accordance with the visual meteorological conditions at night (Night VMC) procedures. He submitted a flight plan which indicated he intended to track along the coast to Taree, then inland via Craven, Singleton and Mt. McQuoid in order to avoid controlled and military restricted areas surrounding Williamtown.

After departing Coolangatta the flight proceeded without recorded incident to Taree. At this point the pilot reported to Sydney Flight Service Centre that he was cruising at 8000 feet and estimating overhead Singleton at 1930 hours EST. At the suggestion of Flight Service and with the agreement of the pilot, Flight Service and Sydney Air Traffic Control then began to co-ordinate a clearance to allow the aircraft to continue to track, more directly, via the coast and transit the Williamtown military areas, however this clearance was delayed because of uncertainty regarding the amount of cloud and general weather conditions to the south of Williamtown. Some 8 minutes after passing Taree the pilot advised that he would continue on his planned track rather than hold to the north of Williamtown pending the issuing of a clearance. He subsequently reported when passing the Craven position, and advised that the aircraft was experiencing "considerable turbulence now and quite a lot of downdraught". Five minutes later, at 1924 hours EST, the pilot reported that the aircraft had entered cloud. He requested a clearance to climb to 10,000 feet and shortly afterwards advised that the primary flight instruments, i.e. the artificial horizon and the gyroscopically controlled direction indicator had failed.

Search and Rescue procedures were initiated and at 1928 hours the aircraft was identified by radar. At this time the aircraft was near the Barrington Tops, some 58 km north of Singleton, and about 40 km northwest of the planned track. This information was relayed to the pilot, who advised that he was having difficulty in climbing to 8500 feet. At 1934 hours he indicated that the aircraft was no longer in cloud, however it had accumulated "a fair amount of ice". He continued to report strong turbulence and further ice accretion, and indicated that the aircraft was descending rapidly. The last recorded transmission from the aircraft was at 1939 hours, when the pilot advised the aircraft was at five thousand feet. Radar contact with the aircraft was also lost at this time.

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT (CONT)

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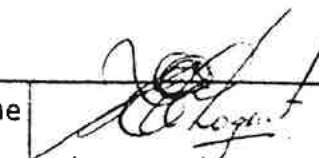
6. RELEVANT EVENTS

An extensive air and ground search was immediately commenced and continued for 10 days without success. Subsequently the search has been reactivated on a number of occasions in response to reports of wreckage being sighted. However, no trace of the aircraft or its occupants has been found.

7. RELEVANT FACTORS

The cause of the accident has not been determined but severe turbulence, icing and a failure of the aircraft's primary flight instruments are probable factors.

Approved for publication under the
provisions of Air Navigation
Regulation 283(1)


(P.E. Choquenot)

Director

Date:
28.9.83

From:

To:

Cc:

Subject:

Date:

Attachments:

Section 22

FOI-AT58

RE: New FOI request - Search for documents - FOI 26-27(05) [SEC=OFFICIAL, NOTE=Freedom of Information Act 1982]

Monday, 10 August 2026 4:57:43 PM

image003.png
image001.png

OFFICIAL, NOTE=Freedom of Information Act 1982

Section 22

I have searched our EDRMS (opus information management) and the following two physical files were identified.

The first being the investigation file, however, the system states “**Location Unknown (not transferred from Iron Mountain during transition project in 2008)**”. It also was not identified/found as part of the recent records file relocation project.

The second file appears to be a previous conducted FOI request relating to the accident. This file is with Iron Mountain – File Label Number: 5500053644793, Box number: M061774412.

	Accident VH-MDX Cessna Aircraft Company 210M 09-Aug-1981 Near BARRINGTON TOPS CAT4 - Occurrence	BC/198101477/001	Physical folder
Section 22			
	INFORMATION MANAGEMENT - FOI 2007-04 FROM	OCCURRENCE NUMBER 198101477 VH-MDX	B2007/0087 Physical folder

I have checked the **NAA records search website** and there are 2 files relating to this accident. The are in Sydney. [Items listing](#). NAA can provide a copy, but at a cost. I believe the records can be viewed at NAA Sydney’s reading room for free.

Select	Series no.	Control symbol	Item title	Date range	Digitised item	Item ID
☐	C1789	SI/812/1036	Registration number VH/MDX Cessna 210, 75 kilometres north of Singleton [Barrington Tops, NSW], 9 August 1981 [aircraft accident file; box 117] Access status: Open with exception	1981 - 1996		12067179
			Location: Sydney			
☐	B638	116/812/1036	Photocopy of Central Office version of air accident file titled: Registration number VH/MDX Cessna 210, 75 kilometres north of Singleton [Barrington Tops, NSW], 9 August 1981 Access status: Open with exception	1981 - 2015		31885425
			Location: Sydney			

Let me know if you would like the FOI file retrieved. **Please note**, our records have not been catalogued by Iron Mountain yet, so not sure how quickly I can retrieve this file.

Hope this helps.

Regards

Section 22

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