

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

4 miles north-west of Wee Waa, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 625 feet	Date 28.4.69	Time (Local) 2000	Zone EST
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THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA25-235 Pawnee	Registration VH-SMP	Certificate of Airworthiness	Valid from 16.6.65	Valid to 15.6.74
Registered Owner Merah North Cotton Co., 32 Pitt Street, Sydney, New South Wales.	Operator Green Acres Air Agriculture Pty. Ltd., 80 Otho Street, Inverell, New South Wales.	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed		
Defects discovered		Other property damaged Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Agricultural Strip	Time of departure 1947	Next point of intended landing Agricultural Strip	Purpose of flight Defoliant Spraying	Class of operation Aerial Work
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THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Ross Richard MACE	Pilot	24	Commercial	300	1600	Serious

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury

6. CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATIONS AND ORDERS


Regulation or Order No.	Nature of contravention

RELEVANT EVENTS

The aircraft was engaged in spraying a defoliant preparation in mature cotton crops. The pilot had flown a total of 4 hours 30 minutes in a tour of duty which began at 0600 hours EST, was interrupted at 1000 hours and began again at 1630 hours when conditions were again suitable for spraying and extended into the night. The pilot completed the area on which he had been working and after the final spraying run, flown on an easterly heading, he began a climbing turn to the right to proceed to the next area, a paddock $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south west. After switching off the work lights and while manipulating the controls in the turn, the pilot felt a momentary snag of the aileron control and he switched on the cockpit lights and looked down at the floor for possible loose objects. After a few seconds, satisfied that all was in order, he switched off the cockpit lights and attempted to level the aircraft on a southerly heading. Almost immediately, and before he had regained outside visual reference, the aircraft struck the ground, 25 degrees nose down and 5 degrees left wing down on a heading of 120 degrees. The undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft slewed to rest 110 feet from the point of first impact. Fire broke out immediately and the pilot, who was otherwise uninjured, suffered burns while evacuating the aircraft.

8. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that the pilot, who was inexperienced in night agricultural operations, became disorientated when he lost visual reference after using the cockpit lighting.

Report approved 	(D.S. GRAHAM)	Designation Assistant Director-General (Air Safety Investigation)	Date 25.6.71
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