

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.

AS/704/1025

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Simpson Desert, Northern Territory.	Lat. 25° 15'S Long 136° 10'E	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 700 feet	Date 24.8.70	Time (Local) Approx. 0900	Zone CST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA32/260 "Cherokee Six"	Registration VH-BIC	Certificate of Airworthiness	Valid from 8.10.65	Valid to 7.10.74
Registered Owner Genoa Oil N.L., 43 Level, Australia Square, Sydney, N.S.W.	Operator D.M. Blackshaw, P.O. Box 580, Newcastle, N.S.W.	Degree of damage to aircraft Substantial		
		Other property damaged Nil		

Defects discovered

The plastic cover of the baggage compartment light was missing, but it was not determined when and under what circumstances it had been removed.

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Birdsville	Time of departure 0710	Next point of intended landing Alice Springs	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
Douglas Malcolm BLACKSHAW	Pilot	41	Senior Commercial	60	4420	Nil

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
George Harold BOUCKLEY	Passenger	Nil	Ian John SERGEANT	Passenger	Nil
Samuel John CRAWFORD	Passenger	Nil	Egils Vilnis RASMANIS	Passenger	Nil
			Lorraine MELMETH	Passenger	Nil

6. CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Regulation or Order No.	Nature of contravention

RELEVANT EVENTS

Approximately thirty minutes after departure a peculiar odour was noticed in the cabin which the pilot attributed to a boiling battery. He turned off the master switch and, since the odour then partially dissipated, continued the flight and advised that he would only use the aircraft's electrics to report at scheduled times. However, as the flight progressed, the fumes in the cabin became so obnoxious that a forced landing became imperative. The pilot advised his intentions and landed on a lone small claypan but over-ran into the surrounding uneven sand. During the landing the forward baggage compartment door flew open and portions of a burning foam plastic mattress fell out, igniting small spinifex bushes. After disembarkation, the fire, now obviously in the baggage compartment, was quickly extinguished and the spinifex fires were trampled out.

The investigation established that a rolled foam mattress, which was the last item loaded at Birdsville, partially unravelled itself in flight and contacted the illuminated hot naked bulb in the baggage compartment light causing the foam to smoulder and emit acrid smoke and fumes which were carried back to the cabin. The composition of the foam was such that the smouldering would continue even when the heat source was removed but it is probable that the mattress did not burst into flames until the door flew open during the landing roll.

8. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the measures adopted to protect the cargo compartment light and to separate it from cargo were inadequate.

Report approved

(D.S. GRAHAM)

Designation
Assistant Director-General
(Air Safety Investigation)Date
10.4.72

DEFINITIONS

ACCIDENT - An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all those persons have disembarked and in which

- (a) any person suffers death or serious injury as a result of being in or upon the aircraft or by direct contact with the aircraft or anything attached to the aircraft; or
- (b) the aircraft suffers substantial damage.

FATAL INJURY - Any injury which results in death within 30 days.

SERIOUS INJURY - Any injury other than a fatal injury which

- (a) requires hospitalisation for more than 48 hours, commencing within seven days from the date the injury was received; or
- (b) results in a fracture of any bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes or nose); or
- (c) involves lacerations which cause severe haemorrhages, nerve, muscle or tendon damage; or
- (d) involves injury to any internal organ; or
- (e) involves second or third degree burns, or any burns affecting more than five percent of the body surface.

MINOR INJURY - Any injury other than as defined under "Fatal Injury" or "Serious Injury".

DESTROYED - Consumed by fire, demolished or damaged beyond repair.

SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE - Damage or structural failure which adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft and which would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component. The following types of damage are specifically excluded: engine failure, damage limited to an engine, bent fairings or cowling, dented skin, small punctured holes in the skin or fabric, taxi-ing damage to propeller blades, damage to tyres, engine accessories, brakes, or wingtips.

MINOR DAMAGE - Damage other than as defined under "Destroyed" or "Substantial Damage".