

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

5 miles south west of Narrabri, New South Wales.

Height o.m.s.l. (ft)  
750 feet

Date  
4.2.71

Time (Local)  
1745

Zone  
EST

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA28-180 Cherokee	Registration VH-PPQ	Certificate of Airworthiness	Valid from 21.8.67	Valid to 20.8.76
Registered Owner Winchcombe Carson Ltd., G.P.O. Box 1626, Sydney, New South Wales.	Operator Winchcombe Carson Ltd., G.P.O. Box 1626, Sydney, New South Wales.		Degree of damage to aircraft Substantial	Other property damaged Electrical Power Lines

Defects discovered

Ignition leads to No. 1 cylinder from both magnetos found to be tracking to earth at lead attach ferrule.

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Narrabri	Time of departure 1740	Next point of intended landing Accident Site	Purpose of flight Carriage of workers on flood relief duties	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
Peter Russell FRENCH	Pilot	52	Private	404	593	Serious

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Helen Isabelle COOTE	Passenger	Serious	Anthony John	Passenger	
Raymond John HOBDEN	Passenger	Serious	McDERMOTT		Fatal

6. CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Regulation or Order No.	Nature of contravention
A.N.R. 89(1)	The pilot operated at a place which was not authorised by the Director-General for use as an aerodrome since it did not meet the requirements in respect of width and freedom from obstruction as specified in Aeronautical Information Publication AIP AGA 4-5.

7. RELEVANT EVENTS

A section of road near Narrabri West had been marked for use as an emergency airstrip in connection with flood relief. This section, some 3000 feet in length, was obstruction free over a width of approximately 100 feet, the bituminous sealed road in the centre being 18 feet wide. At the southern end of the selected area a power line crossed the road, 28 feet above the surface, with one supporting pole adjacent to the western side of the road. A line indicating the strip threshold had been painted across the road 140 feet north of this position and a large cross was painted on the road surface immediately below the power line. The steepness of the approach gradient had been recognised and a diagram of the situation was displayed in the pilot briefing room at Narrabri aerodrome. The strip was in constant use by light aircraft, but although the pilot had been engaged on flood relief for several days he had not previously landed at the strip. On this occasion the pilot sought information concerning the strip before departing Narrabri and he determined the location and length of the strip, but he has since stated that he was not aware of the presence of the wires. He flew across the emergency strip at about the mid point and joined left downwind for a landing from the south, approaching over the wires. The aircraft struck the ground in a steep nose down attitude, 116 feet from the power lines and 24 feet short of the strip threshold.

OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that an emergency airstrip was selected, laid out and used without proper regard for published aerodrome safety standards.

Report approved

(D.S. GRAHAM)

Designation  
Assistant Director-General  
(Air Safety Investigation)

Date  
13.9.71