

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199800344**

**Pitts Aviation Enterprises
S-2A**

06 February 1998

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NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at www.atsb.gov.au.

Occurrence Number: 199800344 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: Floraville Station
State: QLD **Inv Category:** 4
Date: Friday 06 February 1998
Time: 0900 hours **Time Zone:** EST
Highest Injury Level: Fatal
Injuries:

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	Total
Crew	1	0	0	0	1
Ground	0	0	0	0	0
Passenger	1	0	0	0	1
Total	2	0	0	0	2

Aircraft Manufacturer: Pitts Aviation Enterprises
Aircraft Model: S-2A
Aircraft Registration: VH-DAF **Serial Number:** 2224
Type of Operation: Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel
Damage to Aircraft: Destroyed
Departure Point: Proa Station Qld
Departure Time: 0645 EST
Destination: Burketown Qld

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	Private	586.8	1062

Approved for Release: Tuesday, March 3, 1998

Circumstances

A mains power failure at 0900 EST affected several properties along the Leichhardt River. The relevant electricity authority chartered a helicopter to conduct an aerial patrol along the affected power line. At about 1530, the pilot of the helicopter found a break in a single wire earth return (SWER) power line to Floraville Station homestead where it crossed the Leichhardt River. The broken ends had been flung into trees on the riverbanks. Debris, later identified as parts of a Pitts Special aircraft, was found downstream from the break.

Several days later, the wreckage of VH-DAF was located by police divers. It had come to rest upside down in about 6 m of water, approximately 160 m downstream from and north of the wire strike.

Examination of the aircraft revealed that it was banked approximately 15 degrees right wing low when it struck the power line from a southerly direction. The left top wing had been torn from the aircraft.

The broken span was located near a 20 degree right bend in the river. It was 280 m long, aligned 080/260 degrees M, and hanging approximately 10 m above the water. The line was suspended below the level of the tops of the trees on the riverbank. Viewed from the south, the old, oxidised wire was difficult to see against the background. The power poles were positioned away from the riverbanks amongst trees. They, too, were difficult to see. The distance of the aircraft wreckage from the point of impact with the wire, and the position of the broken ends of the wire, are indicative of a high speed impact.

The homestead was serviced by a gravel air strip aligned north/south, parallel to the reach of the river where the aircraft was found. The southern threshold was approximately 800 m north-west of the wire strike. The air strip was not visible from the level of the power line across the river.

The local weather at the time of the accident was fine with a clear sky.
