

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199300822**

**Piper Aircraft Corp
Turbo Arrow**

09 April 1993

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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: 199300822 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 5km NW Evans Head
State: NSW **Inv Category:** 3
Date: Friday 09 April 1993
Time: 0515 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: Piper Aircraft Corp
Aircraft Model: PA-28RT-201T
Aircraft Registration: VH-IWJ **Serial Number:** 28R-8231066
Type of Operation: Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel
Damage to Aircraft: Destroyed
Departure Point: Coolangatta Qld
Departure Time: 0443 EST
Destination: Maitland NSW

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	Private	105.0	500

Approved for Release: Thursday, February 9, 1995

Prior to commencing the Night VFR (Visual Flight Rules) flight, the pilot obtained a pre-flight briefing by facsimile. This briefing included the appropriate weather forecast for the intended route.

After departing Coolangatta, the pilot reported to Brisbane Flight Service that he intended climbing to 7,500 ft and that he would remain outside controlled airspace. About 22 minutes later a single radio transmission was received by Brisbane Flight Service. The transmission, by a male voice, said 'I'm doing cartwheels'. This voice was different from the voice that made the initial transmission from VH-IWJ to Flight Service.

Witnesses in the Evans Head area observed the aircraft flying towards the north-west at an estimated altitude of 1,000 ft above the ground. They reported that it was flying erratically before commencing a looping manoeuvre. At the top of that manoeuvre the aircraft appeared to lose all airspeed, then dive vertically into the ground.

The aircraft was extensively damaged by impact forces. Inspection of the wreckage did not reveal any pre-existing faults that may have contributed to the occurrence.

Post-mortem examination of the pilot did not provide evidence sufficient to determine whether he had suffered from any form of incapacitation.

The weather forecast obtained by the pilot indicated that showers were expected along the route and that some low cloud would be associated with the showers. Provided the pilot remained clear of the showers a flight under VFR should have been possible. There is extensive ground lighting in the area from Coolangatta to Ballina but after that the ground lighting reduces as the settlements become more widely spread. The moon was located in the western sky but most witnesses reported that it was dark at the time they observed the aircraft and that there was cloud in the area. Consequently, the pilot may have been deprived of a visual horizon from time to time.

The pilot was reported to have been in current flying practice, having last flown at night on 28 February 1993. He had held a Night VFR rating since 25 September 1987.

The available evidence is consistent with the pilot having lost control of the aircraft and being unable to regain control before it impacted the ground.

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

The factors leading to an apparent loss of control of the aircraft could not be positively determined.