

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198800707**

Piper PA32R

1 April 1988

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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: 198800707
Location: Mount Bunday Station NT
Date: 1 April 1988
Highest Injury Level: Minor
Injuries:

Occurrence Type: Accident
Time: 1315

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	1	1
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	7	1
Total	0	0	7	2

Aircraft Details: Piper PA32R
Registration: VH-AOP
Serial Number: 32R-8013109
Operation Type: Charter
Damage Level: Substantial
Departure Point: Mount Bunday Station NT
Departure Time: 1315
Destination: Darwin NT

Approved for Release: 26 October 1988

Circumstances:

The pilot was requested to conduct an aerial survey in the Mount Bunday area, however, he evidently misunderstood the instructions and flight planned to Mt Bunday Station. This strip was 74 kilometres south-west of the passengers' expected destination. During the flight the front seat passenger, who was also a pilot, became concerned and questioned the pilot at length as to their route. Because of the confusion, and deteriorating weather conditions, the pilot decided to continue and land at the Station strip. A normal landing was subsequently carried out. The pilot then discovered that although the strip was 1100 metres long, a washaway had reduced the usable length to about 700 metres, and this was covered by long grass. After ascertaining the passengers' exact requirements, the pilot prepared for take-off. Acceleration was sluggish because of the long grass, and the stall warning was sounding continuously as the aircraft became airborne near the end of the strip. It failed to climb away, and collided with trees and fences before coming to rest. The aircraft Performance Charts indicated that a strip length of 840 metres was required for a safe take-off. It is likely that the pilot's performance was degraded because he was suffering the effects of a cold. The task had been allocated to him at short notice, and he was under some pressure from the passengers.

Significant Factors:

It was considered that the following factors were relevant to the development of the accident

1. The pilot's preparation for the original survey flight was insufficiently detailed.
2. Before take-off from the Station strip, the pilot did not make full use of the performance Charts to ascertain the strip length required.

3. The strip surface was covered by long, wet grass.
4. The take-off attempt was not abandoned when it was realised the aircraft was not performing as expected.
5. The pilot was operating under emotional and physical stresses, which evidently affected his standards of judgment and performance.