

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199100009**

Piper PA-30

10 March 1991

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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: 199100009

Occurrence Type: Accident

Location: Fitzroy Falls NSW

Date: 10 March 1991

Time: 1700

Highest Injury Level: Fatal

Injuries:

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

Aircraft Details: Piper PA-30

Registration: VH-MCO

Serial Number: 30-950

Operation Type: Private

Damage Level: Destroyed

Departure Point: Dubbo NSW

Departure Time: 1528

Destination: Not known

Approved for Release: 27th August 1991

Circumstances:

The pilot did not submit flight plan details, but departing Dubbo he advised tracking for Goulburn. No further communication was received from the aircraft, although there was evidence to suggest an intention to proceed to Bega with an intermediate landing at Wollongong. Approximately 80 minutes later, witnesses in the Fitzroy Falls area observed an aircraft fitting the description of VH-MCO, flying very low in various directions, at times obscured by cloud which had enveloped much of the area's higher terrain. Witnesses later heard a noise which caused them to believe that the aircraft had crashed. The area at the time was under the influence of a moist south-easterly air mass, with cloud and showers along the coast and adjacent ranges extending to the western slopes of the Great Divide. An extensive air and ground search located the aircraft almost 48 hours later, approximately 100 feet below the level of a ridge. The aircraft had struck trees, which removed the right wing and outer left wing, before coming to rest under a large over-hanging rock ledge. The aircraft was reduced to non-surviveable dimensions. There was no evidence of any pre-impact defect affecting the aircraft, and the damage sustained was consistent with the aircraft being in controlled flight at impact. No evidence was found to indicate that the pilot was either qualified, or experienced in the conduct of flight in Instrument Meteorological Conditions.

Significant Factors:

The following factor was considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. The pilot exercised poor judgement by continuing flight into weather conditions in which he was not able to maintain the visual reference necessary to ensure adequate terrain clearance.