Aviation Safety Investigation Report 199001145

Piper PA32-R300

23 May 1990

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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 <u>www.atsb.gov.au</u>.

Occurrence Number:		199001145			Occurrence Type: Accident	
Date:		23 May 1990			Time: 1134	
Highest Injury Level:		Nil				
Injuries:				~ .		
			Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
		Crew	0	0	1	1
		Ground	0	0	0	-
		Passenger	0	0	0	5
		Total	0	0	0	6
Aircraft Details:	Piper P.	A32-R300				
Registration:	vH-WHG					
Serial Number:	32R-7780103					
Operation Type:	Charter					
Damage Level:	Substantial					
Departure Point:	Launceston TAS					
Departure Time:	1020					
Destination •	Launceston TAS					

Approved for Release: 8th April 1991

Circumstances:

At the completion of a local flight the pilot selected the landing gear down but there was no subsequent indication that it was down and locked. He cycled the landing gear and actuated the emergency lowering system. The aircraft was directed to remain clear of the circuit for some time before it was cleared to return and fly past the tower five times to allow a visual inspection of the landing gear. After the last fly past, as the aircraft was climbing to the left the engine began to surge. The pilot continued the turn, intending to land on runway 14, and attempted to restore power. However, the engine did not respond and the aircraft landed heavily in a field 400 metres short of the runway. Inspection of the aircraft after the accident indicated that the landing gear had been down and locked at the time of impact. As the landing gear had been dislodged in the accident, it was not possible to ascertain the cause of the malfunction. It was established that the pilot had flown with the left fuel tank selected until the engine began to surge. Examination of the aircraft showed that the left tank was empty, and the right tank contained approximately 85 litres of fuel. The pilot had evidently become preoccupied with the landing gear problem. He also had to contend with an increase in radio traffic as the airport controllers passed advice to him and prepared the airport for a possible landing with a gear malfunction, all on the one frequency. The pilot's preoccupation caused him to lose awareness of time and he did not return to his check sequence and change the fuel tank selection before the left tank ran dry. Testing of the fuel system after the accident showed that it was unlikely that, with the limited time available to him, the pilot could switch tanks and get the engine re-started before he was faced with a forced landing. FACTORS 1. The pilot became preoccupied with a landing gear indication malfunction, and lost awareness of time. 2. Fuel starvation when the selected tank ran dry. 3. The engine ceased to deliver power at a height that was probably too low to permit the engine to be restarted. 4. The pilot was forced to land on unsuitable terrain.