

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199000594**

Piper PA32-300

03 August 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 www.atsb.gov.au.

Occurrence Number: 199000594
Location: 30 Km NNE Murray Bridge SA
Date: 03 August 1990
Highest Injury Level: Minor
Injuries:

Occurrence Type: Accident
Time: 1530

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	4	0
Total	0	0	5	0

Aircraft Details: Piper PA32-300
Registration: VH-HOW
Serial Number: 32-40411
Operation Type: Private
Damage Level: Substantial
Departure Point: Parafield SA
Departure Time: 1435
Destination: Parafield SA

Approved for Release: 17th September 1990

Circumstances:

The pilot had planned a short local scenic flight for members of his family. The aircraft was thoroughly preflighted including a physical check of the contents of the fuel tanks. Enroute, the weather deteriorated and the pilot turned back along his outbound track. He reportedly became stressed due to the weather conditions and with the added anxiety of carrying family members. Approaching the Murray Bridge airstrip, the engine began to run roughly and the pilot assumed that it was running over rich. By this time, the aircraft was about 500 feet above ground level and just below the clouds. The pilot progressively completed a trouble check as he continued the return flight. In his stressed state, and with little familiarity with the position of the fuel selector, he forgot to include a check of the fuel tank selection and contents. The engine then coughed and stopped abruptly. With little altitude and time to select a forced landing site, the pilot chose the best field available. On final approach, the pilot selected mixture to idle cutoff and turned off the fuel. It was at this point, that the pilot discovered that he had forgotten to change fuel tanks and that the selected fuel tank had run dry. He elected to continue with the approach as he was close to landing. The aircraft landed among rocky outcrops and the landing gear was torn off. The aircraft skidded about 40 metres before coming to rest.

Significant Factors:

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. The decision making of the pilot was effected by stress imposed by the weather conditions and the presence of family members on board.
2. Low total experience of the pilot and lack of familiarity with the aircraft type.

3. Pilot did not properly complete emergency drills in flight.
4. Improper decision to continue flight in adverse weather.
5. Forced landing on unsuitable terrain due to low altitude at which the engine failure occurred. This accident was not the subject of an on-scene investigation.