



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Aircraft proximity event between a Mooney M20, VH-FRO and a Piper PA-31, VH-HJE

Dubbo Airport, New South Wales, 2 May 2013

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Addendum

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Aircraft proximity event between a Mooney M20, VH-FRO and a Piper PA-31, VH-HJE

What happened

On 2 May 2013, a Mooney M20 aircraft, registered VH-FRO (FRO) was inbound to Dubbo, New South Wales. The pilot was conducting a private flight and was the only person on board. The pilot reported that he broadcast on the Dubbo common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) at 20 NM and at 10 NM indicating that he was on descent and would join base for runway 05.

At about 1217 Eastern Standard Time,¹ the pilot of a Piper PA-31 aircraft, registered VH-HJE (HJE) was preparing to depart Dubbo. He broadcast on the Dubbo CTAF his intention to conduct an instrument flight rules flight from Dubbo to Lightning Ridge. The pilot and a flight nurse were on board. The pilot taxied via taxiway Alpha (A) to the holding point for runway 05 (Figure 1). At the holding point, the pilot conducted engine run ups and pre-flight checks. At about the same time, a Bonanza aircraft broadcast on the Dubbo CTAF that he was at 20 NM on descent for Dubbo runway 05. The pilot of HJE made contact with the pilot of the Bonanza to indicate his intentions and maintain separation.

Figure 1: Dubbo airport



Source: Google earth

The pilot of FRO reported that he heard the pilot of HJE's broadcasts and when he broadcast that he was on final for runway 05, he saw HJE stationary at the holding point.

¹ Eastern Standard Time (EST) was Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) +10 hours.

At about 1220, the pilot of HJE had completed the engine run ups and broadcast his intention to enter and back track to runway 05. Before the aircraft commenced moving, the pilot reported that he looked down the flight path of runways 05 and 23 and did not see any aircraft. He stated that he had not heard any broadcasts from FRO.

On short final, at about 200 feet above ground level (AGL), the pilot of FRO heard the broadcast from HJE and saw HJE move. At the same time, the pilot of HJE spotted an aircraft, which was previously obscured by the aircraft's window frame, on short final for runway 05 and brought HJE to a stop. The pilot of FRO applied full power and commenced a go-around.

The pilot of HJE broadcast on the Dubbo CTAF and Narromine CTAF trying to contact FRO without success. The pilot of HJE contacted the Bonanza on the CTAF and informed him of the presence of FRO in the circuit area and the Bonanza acknowledged HJE's broadcast that he had sighted FRO.

The pilot of HJE indicated that when he had both FRO and the Bonanza visual he entered, backtracked and departed runway 05 making the appropriate broadcasts on the CTAF.

The pilot of FRO could hear over the radio that the inbound Bonanza had him visual and completed the circuit and landed without incident, making all the appropriate radio calls.

Pilot FRO comments

The pilot of FRO reported that he could hear his voice clearly through the headset and had communicated without issue with another aircraft as he was taxiing at Manuka Station airstrip, New South Wales. Also when he made his 20 NM broadcast, he reported that he heard the aerodrome frequency response unit 'Dubbo aerodrome', which indicated that his broadcast was received by the unit.

The pilot reported he had his radio system inspected at Dubbo after the incident and it was determined that a radio communication switch was faulty, resulting in no broadcasts being made from the aircraft on that communication system.

Pilot HJE comments

The pilot of HJE believed that he was only just past the holding point of taxiway A before the aircraft came to a stop. He had not heard any radio broadcasts from FRO and had tried to contact him on the Dubbo CTAF and another local CTAF, when he became aware of his presence.

Safety action

Whether or not the ATSB identifies safety issues in the course of an investigation, relevant organisations may proactively initiate safety action in order to reduce their safety risk. The ATSB has been advised of the following proactive safety action in response to this occurrence.

Operator of VH-HJE

As a result of this occurrence, the aircraft operator of VH-HJE has advised the ATSB that they are taking the following safety actions:

Notice to pilots

The operator has issued a notice to all company pilots to ensure an effective lookout prior to entering a runway at non-controlled aerodromes, regardless of nil activity on the CTAF frequency.

Owner of VH-FRO

As a result of this occurrence, the aircraft owner of VH-FRO advised the ATSB that the radio system was repaired before further flight.

Safety message

The ATSB SafetyWatch highlights the broad safety concerns that come out of our investigation findings and from the occurrence data reported to us by industry. One of the safety concerns is safety around non-towered aerodromes. www.atsb.gov.au/safetywatch/safety-around-aeros.aspx



As is highlighted by this incident and other occurrences reported to the ATSB, some aircraft may not have a radio that is working or is tuned to the correct frequency. There may be a variety of aircraft of different sizes and performance levels all operating at the same time in the same airspace. It is important to not rely solely on monitoring your radio to achieve traffic awareness.

The ATSB has issued a publication called *A pilot's guide to staying safe in the vicinity of non-towered aerodromes* which outlines many of the common problems that occur at non-towered aerodromes, and offers useful strategies to keep yourself and other pilots safe. The publication is available at [www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2008/ar-2008-044\(1\).aspx](http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2008/ar-2008-044(1).aspx).

In addition, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has produced several publications and resources that provide important safety advice for operations at, or in the vicinity of non-towered aerodromes see www.casa.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?WCMS:STANDARD::pc=PC_100058.

General details

Occurrence details

Occurrence category:	Incident	
Primary occurrence type:	Aircraft proximity event	
Location:	Dubbo Airport, New South Wales	
	Latitude: 32° 13.00'S	Longitude: 148° 34.48'E

VH-FRO

Manufacturer and model:	Mooney M20	
Registration:	VH-FRO	
Type of operation:	General aviation	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 0
Injuries:	Crew – Nil	Passengers – Nil
Damage:	Nil	

VH-HJE

Manufacturer and model:	Piper PA-31	
Registration:	VH-HJE	
Type of operation:	Charter	
Persons on board:	Crew – 2	Passengers – 0
Injuries:	Crew – Nil	Passengers – Nil
Damage:	Nil	

About the ATSB

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory agency. The Bureau is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences; safety data recording, analysis and research; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The ATSB is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, marine and rail operations in Australia that fall within Commonwealth jurisdiction, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving Australian registered aircraft and ships. A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to fare-paying passenger operations.

The ATSB performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* and Regulations and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

The object of a safety investigation is to identify and reduce safety-related risk. ATSB investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or determine liability. At the same time, an investigation report must include factual material of sufficient weight to support the analysis and findings. At all times the ATSB endeavours to balance the use of material that could imply adverse comment with the need to properly explain what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

About this report

Decisions regarding whether to conduct an investigation, and the scope of an investigation, are based on many factors, including the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited-scope, fact-gathering investigation was conducted in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.