

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199600236**

**Piper Aircraft Corp  
Pawnee**

**29 January 1996**

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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](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

The Bureau did not conduct an on scene investigation of this occurrence. The information presented below was obtained from information supplied to the Bureau.

**Occurrence Number:** 199600236                      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** Curlewis  
**State:** NSW    **Inv Category:** 4  
**Date:** Monday 29 January 1996  
**Time:** 1015 hours                                      **Time Zone**                      ESuT  
**Highest Injury Level:** Minor  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	Total
Crew	0	0	1	0	1
Ground	0	0	0	0	0
Passenger	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Piper Aircraft Corp  
**Aircraft Model:** PA-25-235  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-ALA    **Serial Number:** 25-3795  
**Type of Operation:** Commercial      Aerial Agriculture/Baiting  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Substantial  
**Departure Point:** Avondale NSW  
**Departure Time:** 0930 ESuT  
**Destination:** Avondale NSW

**Crew Details:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Class of Licence</b>	<b>Hours on Type</b>	<b>Hours Total</b>
Pilot-In-Command	Commercial	1939.1	9744

**Approved for Release:** Thursday, May 2, 1996

The pilot of the Piper Pawnee had completed spraying the first property for the day. After landing, the operator discussed the next job with the pilot, including the area to treated, the rate of application of the chemical, and fuel management. The operator and his son then drove to the next property to mark a cotton field to be sprayed.

Spraying of the field commenced approximately 30 minutes later. After operating for about 50 minutes the engine stopped as the aircraft was flying at about 10 feet above the crop, during a swath run. The pilot climbed the aircraft to 60 feet, performed a trouble check, and then carried out a forced landing straight ahead into the cotton crop. During the landing the wheels entered soft muddy conditions. The aircraft decelerated rapidly, pitched onto its nose, and then overturned.

Owing to the wet conditions, it took the operator about 20 minutes to get to the accident site. On arrival he found the pilot walking along a fence line, dazed and in shock, carrying his helmet which had sustained a large crack on the top.

A subsequent examination of the aircraft by the operator found an absence of fuel. The time airborne had exceeded the fuel endurance of the aircraft. In addition, the pilot did not have a reliable means of determining elapsed time to enable him to monitor fuel endurance. It was reported that the aircraft fuel contents indicator was not sufficiently accurate for precise measurement of the fuel tank contents.

