

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199400041**

**Piper Aircraft Corp
Seminole**

04 January 1994

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Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

Investigations commenced after 1 July 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with the Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 (TSI Act). Reports released under the TSI Act are not admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings.

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: 199400041 **Occurrence Type:** Incident
Location: Fairfield
State: NSW **Inv Category:** 3
Date: Tuesday 04 January 1994
Time: 1438 hours **Time Zone** ESuT
Highest Injury Level: None

Aircraft Manufacturer: Piper Aircraft Corp
Aircraft Model: PA-44-180
Aircraft Registration: VH-HZK **Serial Number:** 44-7995044
Type of Operation: Instructional Dual
Damage to Aircraft: Nil
Departure Point: Bankstown NSW
Departure Time:
Destination: Bankstown NSW

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	Commercial	300.0	2600

Approved for Release: Thursday, January 4, 1996

After a normal preflight check had been carried out, the aircraft departed Bankstown. Soon after levelling off at 1500 ft the crew noticed an air noise from the left emergency exit which appeared to be partially dislodged. The pilot informed air traffic control of his intention to return to the airport but almost immediately the exit hatch separated from the aircraft. The aircraft landed without further incident.

The design of the emergency exit release mechanism permitted the handle to be moved to the locked position while the forward latch remained unlocked. The preflight inspection involved viewing the position of the handle through a cutout in the handle cover to ensure that it was locked. While the pilot had completed this inspection, it provided no guarantee that the exit was properly locked because the pilot cannot see if the locking pins have located correctly.

The investigation established that maintenance on the exit was not required, nor was it performed during the aircraft's last periodic inspection on 16 December 1993. The aircraft was not subsequently flown until the incident flight. However, on 29 December 1993 the operator reported that this aircraft may have been tampered with, together with two other aircraft belonging to him.

Significant factors:

1. The emergency exit handle may have been moved by an unauthorised person or persons.

2. There was no means of alerting the pilot that the locking pins were not correctly located in the emergency exit locking mechanism.

Safety Action:

As a result of this investigation the Bureau issued the following Safety Advisory Notice:

Safety Advisory Notice SAN 940101

The Bureau of Air Safety Investigation suggests that the Civil Aviation Authority consider the applicability of the provision of a suitable method(s) by which a pilot can obtain positive information on the locking status of the forward latching mechanism of the emergency exit in PA-44 aircraft.

The Bureau also suggests that the Civil Aviation Authority ascertain whether a similar problem exists with other aircraft types.