



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Publication of this report is authorized by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

Reference No

SI/802/1036

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

"Eumorella", 5 Km west of Boggabilla, NSW	Height a.m.s.l. 705 feet	Date 14.5.80	Time (Local) 1000 hours	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Snow Commander S-2D	Registration VH-GCN	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 27.6.79
Certificate of Registration issued to	Operator	Degree of damage to aircraft Substantial
		Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point "Eumorella"	Time of departure 0920 hours	Next point of intended landing "Eumorella"	Purpose of flight Crop Spraying	Class of operation Aerial Work
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
	Pilot	40	Commercial	230	2850	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The aircraft was engaged in spraying defoliant on a 16 hectare cotton crop, which was surrounded by extensive level areas of soft, ploughed ground. The weather was fine and the wind was a light easterly. Spraying runs were made in northerly and southerly directions and the final clean-up run was made along the northern boundary of the crop into the west. At the completion of this run, the aircraft climbed away and, as it began to turn to the right, the engine was heard to misfire. The wings were levelled, the engine apparently resumed normal operation, and the aircraft continued climbing. When it reached a height of about 150 feet, the aircraft began a climbing turn to the right and the engine appeared to lose all power. The turn steepened and the nose lowered before the aircraft straightened up in a steep nose down attitude. At a height of some 20 feet, the nose lifted rapidly to a near level attitude before the aircraft struck the ground at a very high rate of descent with relatively low forward speed.

The safety harness of the pilot was found to be unfastened. He was seriously injured and died in hospital on the following day. The harness and release buckle were found to be serviceable and it is possible that the buckle was inadvertently operated by contact with an electrical switch box mounted on the top of the control column.

Detailed examination of the engine and the aircraft wreckage did not reveal any defect or malfunction which might have contributed to the accident. When the wreckage was first examined on the day following the accident, only a very small quantity of fuel was evident in the system, but the fuel tanks and some system components had been damaged to the extent that any remaining fuel would drain away. The aircraft records did not permit an estimate to be made of the quantity of fuel on board at the time of the accident.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that, following a loss of engine power at a low height, the pilot did not maintain a safe air speed. The reason for the loss of engine power could not be established.

Approved for
publication(G. V. Hughes)
Delegate of the SecretaryDate
20.8.1981