

Preliminary Report

ZK-NPI Collision with terrain 40km west of Te Kuiti

21 July 2009

Abstract

At about 1922 New Zealand Standard Time¹ on 21 July 2009 a Reims Aviation Cessna F152 aircraft registered ZK-NPI was being operated on a night Visual Flight Rules flight from North Shore aerodrome near Auckland to New Plymouth aerodrome. The pilot was the only person on board. Following some turning manoeuvres in rugged terrain, the aircraft collided with a ridge top near Tirua Point about 40km west of Te Kuiti. The aircraft was destroyed and the pilot received fatal injuries.

Factual Information

At about 1922 New Zealand Standard Time on 21 July 2009, a Reims Aviation Cessna F152 aircraft registered ZK-NPI was being operated on a night Visual Flight Rules training flight from North Shore Aerodrome near Auckland to New Plymouth Aerodrome. The pilot was the only person on board.

The purpose of the flight was for the pilot to return to his flight training base at New Plymouth. The pilot had been completing a series of cross country flights during the previous two days to accumulate sufficient hours to meet the requirements of his upcoming Instructor Flight Test.

The pilot had flown from New Plymouth to Hamilton on 20 July where he spent the night. On 21 July he flew from Hamilton to North Shore via Waihi Beach, Pauanui Beach, Whitianga, Great Barrier Island, Whangarei, Kaitaia, Cape Reinga, Kaitaia, and Dargaville. He landed at North Shore Aerodrome at about 1735 in the evening.

He called the National Briefing Office at 1739 where he terminated his current flight plan, then filed a flight plan to New Plymouth Aerodrome and requested weather for New Plymouth and Hamilton. He then refuelled the aircraft.

The pilot departed North Shore Aerodrome at approximately 1753 (the end of daylight was 1755) and initially headed west before tracking south to New Plymouth via the west coast of the North Island. The pilot had been given a Secondary Surveillance Radar code which enabled the tracking of his flight path.

At 1852 he called Flight Information and advised that he was at Raglan at 1850. He also requested the latest weather for New Plymouth.

At 1918, which was the time of the last radar return from the aircraft, the pilot had completed a left-hand turn about 10 km inland from Tirua Point and was at an altitude of 1900 feet.

At 1922 the first transmission from the aircraft's Emergency Locator Transmitter was received by the Rescue Coordination Centre of New Zealand.

A search was initiated and the aircraft was found in rugged bush the following day.

¹ The 24 hour clock is used in this report to describe the local time of day, New Zealand Standard Time (NZST), that particular events occurred. NZST is Coordinate Universal Time (UTC) plus 12 hours.

Injuries to persons

The pilot received fatal injuries from the impact.

Pilot information

The pilot held a Commercial Pilot Licence (Aeroplane), an Instrument Rating, and had accumulated a total of approximately 270 hours flying experience at the time of the occurrence.

Weather conditions

The weather conditions were deteriorating towards New Plymouth, with a lowering cloud base and reduced visibility in rain and drizzle.

Wreckage and impact Information

The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces (Figure1). The aircraft struck a tree on a ridge at approximately 1800 feet while on a south-easterly heading. The wreckage trail went for about 300 metres down a steep slope with sections of both wings and elevator being caught in tree branches. The fuselage was jammed between two trees with the engine on the ground 30 metres further down the slope at the end of the wreckage trail. There was no fire. The impact was not survivable.



Figure 1: Accident Site

Ongoing investigation activities

The investigation is continuing and will include examination of:

- the aircraft's maintenance history
- various aircraft components

- the pilot's background and experience
- prevailing weather conditions
- possible human factors that might have affected the pilot's control of the aircraft

If any person has information which may assist with the investigation of this accident then they may contact the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand at isi@caa.govt.nz

CAA accident investigations are conducted in accordance with ICAO guidelines. The sole objective of such investigations is the prevention of accidents by determining the contributing factors or causes and then implementing appropriate preventive measures - in other words restoring safety margins to provide an acceptable level of risk.

The focus of CAA safety investigations is to establish the causes of the accident on the balance of probability. Accident investigations do not always identify one dominant or 'proximate' cause. Often, an aviation accident is the last event in a chain of several events or factors, each of which may contribute to a greater or lesser degree, to the final outcome.

*The sole objective of the investigation of an accident or incident shall be the **prevention** of accidents and incidents. It is **not** the purpose of this activity to **apportion blame or liability**.*