

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA-24-250 G-ASCJ

No & Type of engines: 1 Avco Lycoming O-540-A1A5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1960

Date and time (UTC): 10 September 1986 at 0848 hrs

Location: Bournemouth — Hurn Airport

Type of flight: Private (pleasure)

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 2

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — None

Nature of damage: Fuselage severely damaged and wings wrinkled

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence with IMC, Night and Full Instructor's Ratings

Commander's Age: 51 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 3798 hours (of which 35 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft took off on Runway 26 at Hurn for a flight to Sandown, Isle of Wight. The weather was good and the wind light. Air Traffic Control had requested an early left turn, and the aircraft executed a tight left turn shortly after take-off, taking it overhead Runway 17/35. Shortly after crossing this runway the aircraft suffered complete power loss, at about 500 feet above ground level.

The pilot turned left, made a Mayday call and obtained clearance for a landing on Runway 35. During the approach he was very concerned with looking for another aircraft which he had heard cleared for departure on the reciprocal Runway 17 prior to his emergency, but which had in fact taxied off the runway onto the grass on hearing the Mayday call. This preoccupation, together with difficulty in locating the landing gear selector, led to a failure to select landing gear down and the aircraft landed on the runway wheels-up, resulting in substantial damage to the fuselage and wings.

After the accident it was found that the left wing fuel tank, which had been selected for the whole flight, contained only around one quarter of its maximum contents of 12.5 imp/gal compared to a cockpit gauge reading at take-off of approximately one half. The pilot, who supplied very full and useful information on the circumstances of the accident, believed that the engine fuel supply inlet in the left wing could have become uncovered in the course of the steep turn after take-off and caused engine fuel starvation. He believed he should have physically cross-checked tank contents against gauges before take-off. He did not manage to select the right tank after the power loss because of the preoccupation with locating the other aircraft.

After issuing the Mayday the pilot was unable, in the heat of the moment, to re-locate the hand-held microphone, and believes that this significantly delayed him in obtaining information on the departing traffic. He was unused to this particular aircraft and, being a flying club Chief Flying Instructor, was unused to flying in the left seat.

Additionally, in the light of his experience, the pilot considered that when practising engine failure drills the control or instrument being operated or checked needs to be actually touched, rather than just named.

The pilot also noted that the landing gear warning horn had almost exactly the same tone as the stall warning horn on the training aircraft he normally flew. Consequently he mistook the gear warning for the stall warning in the short time available.