

No: 5/87

Ref: 1b

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA-31 G-ECMA

No & Type of engines: 2 Lycoming T10-540-A2C piston engines

Year of Manufacture: 1977

Date and time (UTC): 24 March 1987 at 1502 hrs

Location: Rochester Airport, Kent

Type of flight: Business executive

Persons on board: Crew — 2 Passengers — None

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — N/A

Nature of damage: Nose landing gear collapsed — resultant damage to both propellers, nose landing gear doors, and some wrinkling of the lower fuselage

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 55 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 12,956 hours (of which 3216 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot.

The aircraft was being taxied for an anticipated take-off and departure from runway 21 at Rochester aerodrome. The pilot reports that he noted that both the marked grass runways and taxiways were very wet with standing water in places. Therefore, in order to minimise the possible ingestion of mud splatter within the landing gear mechanisms, he directed the aircraft towards the slightly longer grass alongside the marked taxiway. After taxiing forward for a further 15 metres or so, a loud bang was heard and the aircraft pitched forward onto its nose, allowing both propellers to contact the ground. The pilot closed down all aircraft services and both occupants vacated the aircraft without difficulty.

Subsequent examination revealed that the nose landing gear had dug a furrow approximately 1 metre in length in the soft ground before a turnbuckle strut above the retraction arm failed at both ends, and the nose landing gear collapsed.