

Aircraft type and registration: Piper PA-25-235 G-BHUU

No & Type of engines: 1 Lycoming O-540-B2C5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1980

Date and time (UTC): 19 May 1987 at 1022 hrs

Location: Flitcham, Kings Lynn, Norfolk

Type of flight: Aerial Application

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — None

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — N/A

Nature of damage: Aircraft destroyed

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 57 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 10288 hours (of which approximately 7000 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot had made a successful take-off from the small field from which he was operating about seven minutes before the accident flight. Since the wind was light and variable and estimated by the pilot to be less than one knot, a take-off direction was selected which ran diagonally across the field and which gave a total distance available of some 800 yards. Towards bordered track, a cornfield was available for emergency use. With a short take-off technique the pilot anticipated being airborne by the time he reached the down slope but in the event the aircraft failed to leave the ground by the point at which the take-off could be abandoned without striking the hedge. The pilot decided to continue the take-off, hoping that by releasing the load of fertiliser on 'full dump' he would achieve the necessary acceleration to a flying speed which would be correspondingly reduced. The aircraft crashed through the hedge, yawing and rolling to the right before the right wing struck the ground. The aircraft then flipped over backwards before coming to rest with the tail unit folded round the cockpit and the engine torn out of the airframe. The pilot's harness had restrained him although he states that most of the impact forces had been absorbed by the tail unit of the aircraft. He also states that he had some difficulty in extricating himself from the wreckage due partly to some disorientation but also due to the fact that once he had released his harness he found it difficult to locate and operate the cabin access release levers. The pilot considers that once he had decided to continue the take-off the aircraft was prevented from further acceleration by the slightly longer grass which was growing on the down slope and the dump of the solid fertiliser particles took longer than was desirable in the circumstances. He attributes the longer take-off run to a possible wind shift during the ground roll.