

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT NO. 4/88

REPORT ON THE ACCIDENT TO CESSNA F172M OO-JEL IN THE SEA, 3 NM EAST-NORTH-EAST OF RYDE, ISLE OF WIGHT ON 30 APRIL 1987
(PUBLISHED BY HMSO ON 22 AUGUST 1988. NET COST £4.80)

The Inspector's report on this accident was submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 July 1988. He has agreed to its publication and the report is now available from HMSO Bookshops and accredited agents.

The aircraft was on a flight from Antwerp to Exeter. It was refuelled to full tanks before departure, and radio telephony (RTF) communications were satisfactory throughout the flight, although the pilot appeared to have difficulty with non-routine messages.

The cloud cover on the route was reported to be layered strato cumulus up to 8,000 feet, with locally embedded cumulus. The aircraft was flown at heights of between 1,000 feet and 4,500 feet in order to avoid entering cloud. Upon approaching the Solent area, Southampton Air Traffic Control (ATC) asked the pilot if he could descend from 3,500 feet to 3,000 feet and accept a re-routing to take the aircraft north of the Bournemouth (Hurn) area. The pilot agreed and was asked to turn onto a heading of 360° magnetic, a 110° turn to the right, which he again accepted.

Shortly afterwards the aircraft was seen to dive out of low cloud, apparently fast and under power, and to strike a yacht. The aircraft and yacht disintegrated and sank. The three occupants of the aircraft were killed, as were the two persons onboard the yacht. Very little wreckage was recovered.

The accident was probably the result of the pilot continuing VFR flight into adverse weather conditions for which he was neither trained nor qualified. The weather, and manoeuvres carried out by the pilot, would have been conducive to spatial disorientation, with consequent loss of control of the aircraft. Two recommendations were made:

1. The Civil Aviation Authority reviews its existing publications which remind pilots that they are responsible for the safe conduct of their flight, and that other than when under positive radar control, the ATC service is 'purely advisory'.

In addition, pilots should be advised that upon initial contact with each ATC unit, they should state, positively, whether they wish to maintain VFR conditions. The CAA should also liaise with other regulatory authorities on this aspect to ensure that pilots visiting the UK are similarly advised.

2. The CAA consider the implications of ATC requests, which may be made to a pilot with no instrument flying qualification, both with regard to the possible effect on the continued safe flight of that, and any other, aircraft