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Our Ref: AIC 25-R08/24-1003

Safety recommendation: AIC 25-R08/24-1003

Addressed to: North Coast Aviation Limited

Date issued: 16 May 2025

Investigation link: AIC 24-1003

Action status: Issued

Introduction

At 11:20 local time on 22 December 2024, North Coast Aviation notified the PNG Accident Investigation Commission that one of their aircraft, a Pilatus Britten-Norman BN2B-26 Islander aircraft, registered P2-SAM on a VFR¹ single pilot charter flight from Wasu to Nadzab, Morobe Province, had not arrived at Nadzab. A COSPAS SARSAT² signal had been received by the PNG Rescue Coordination Centre and a Distress Phase had been declared with initial search procedures commenced.

The AIC immediately commenced an investigation.

Occurrence

On 22 December 2024, at 10:28 local time (00:18 UTC³), a Pilatus Britten-Norman BN2B-26 Islander aircraft, registered P2-SAM, owned and operated by North Coast Aviation Limited (NCA), on a VFR single pilot charter flight from Wasu to Nadzab, Morobe Province, collided with terrain 20 nm southwest of Wasu, (32 nm north of Nadzab). All persons on board were fatally injured upon impact. The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and an intense post-impact fire.

Safety deficiency description

The aircraft was fitted with a Garmin 430W receiver which had a data card installed that provided colour coded *Terrain Avoidance and Warning System (TAWS)*. The operator had not subscribed to the Garmin manufacturer's audio alert interface and so the receiver's TAWS warnings and alert functionality was only visual.

¹ Visual Flight Rules.

² A satellite system designed to detect and locate activated distress beacons transmitting in the frequency band of 406.0-406.1 MH. Source: ICAO/IMO IAMSAR MANUAL.

³ The 24-hour clock, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is used in this report to describe the local time as specific events occurred. Local time in the area of the accident, Papua New Guinea Time (Pacific/Port Moresby Time) is UTC + 10 hours.

It is not uncommon for pilots flying under visual flight rules (VFR) to ignore warnings from these systems when flying across PNG terrain in visual conditions, with full situational awareness.

However, when flying in cloud a pilot must comply with lowest safe altitude requirements and also immediately act on any terrain warning from the aircraft's on-board systems.

The investigation was unable to determine if the pilot received and terrain warnings.

Recommendation number AIC 25-R08/24-1003 to North Coast Aviation Limited

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) recommends that North Coast Aviation Limited (NCA) should ensure that aircraft in its fleet fitted with Global Navigation System receivers with terrain warning functionality to activate the capability of displaying colour coded warnings and issuing aural alerts and that the serviceability of those systems is maintained.

Action requested

The AIC requests that the North Coast Aviation Limited (NCA) note recommendation AIC 25-R08/24-1003 and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days of the issue date and explain (including with evidence) how NCA has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.

STATUS: ISSUED.



Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner

16 May 2025