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Our Ref: AIC 26-R02/25-1002

Safety recommendation: AIC 26-R02/25-1002

Addressed to: Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG

Date issued: 16 April 2026

Investigation link: AIC 25-1002

Action status: Issued

Introduction

On 23 April 2025, at 08:30 local (22:30 UTC¹), a Cessna T188C aircraft, registered VH-SOY, was conducting VFR low-level agricultural operations at the Ramu sugar fields when it impacted the ground at Sangkiang village in the Usino Bundi District, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea.

The aircraft was owned by JANLIT Pty2 Ltd² of Tully, Queensland. Liddles Aerial Spraying Pty Ltd of Innisfail, Queensland operated the aircraft in Australia and contracted (hired) the aircraft and pilot to RAMU Agri Industries Ltd (RAIL) in PNG. RAIL was the PNG Operator of VH-SOY.

The pilot was the sole occupant of the aircraft and was fatally injured. According to RAIL, at about 08:30, during the third round of crop spraying to the northwest, the aircraft impacted the ground at Sangkiang Village, located about 10 nm northwest of Gusap Airstrip. The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and a post-impact fuel-fed fire.

As a result of the investigation into the accident, the PNG Accident Investigation Commission issued the following recommendations to address concerns identified in this report.

Safety deficiency description

The investigation found that, although the *Permit to Fly* issued to RAIL contained general conditions relating to operator compliance and safe conduct of flight operations, it did not:

- Explicitly specify operational parameters relevant to low-level flying (defined as operations below 500 feet AGL);
- Include conditions specific to aerial application activities such as agricultural spraying or dusting; or
- Require additional vetting or qualification criteria for pilots conducting such specialised operations.

¹ 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 around the accident, Papua New Guinea Time (Pacific/Port Moresby Time) is UTC +10 hours

² Liddles Aerial Spraying operates a fleet of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters with bases in Mareeba, Tully and Innisfail in Queensland, Australia, providing aerial spraying services to the agricultural industry.

Such provisions are critical to ensuring that pilots and operators adhere to tailored safety protocols designed for the unique risks associated with low-level agricultural aviation operations.

Recommendation AIC 26-R02/25-1002 to PNG Civil Aviation Safety Authority (PNG CASA).

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On 17 October 2025, during a CASA-AIC meeting, CASA PNG informed the investigation of the following Safety Actions proposed following the accident:

- Ensure rigorous PTF application processes are applied and further risk assessment are carried out particularly regarding pilot qualifications.
- Ensure pilot details are included in all future PTF applications.
 - Restrict changes to pilot assignments after an application has been submitted and approved.
 - Continue improving the PTF process to enhance safety and compliance.

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission recommends that in addition to the proposed Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG (CASA) safety action, in order to strengthen safety oversight, CASA should review its *Permit to Fly* application requirements and consider including specific/explicit operational conditions to the Permit to Fly with conditions for agricultural operations in PNG that address:

- Minimum safe altitudes and designated low-level flight where appropriate
- Approved methods, procedures and restrictions for aerial spraying activities
- Pilot qualifications and operational approvals specific to these activities

Including these conditions in the *Permit to Fly* would help ensure that agricultural aviation activities are conducted with appropriate safety margins and regulatory supervision within Papua New Guinea.

Action requested

The AIC requests that the Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL) note recommendation AIC 26-R02/25-1002 and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days of the issue date but no later than 15 July 2026 and explain (including with evidence) how RAIL has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.

STATUS: ISSUED.



Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner

16 April 2026