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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).

Date Issued: 16 April 2026

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

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

On 3 July 2026, CASA responded and provided evidence of implementation of the safety action proposed on 17 October 2025.

CASA PNG has demonstrated that the corrective actions have been fully implemented through significant enhancements to its Permit to Fly (PTF) oversight process for specialised aerial application operations. Evidence provided indicates that:

- The revised **Permit to Fly No. 01/2025 Revision 2** introduced operational conditions specific to aerial agricultural operations, including:
 - Identification of the approved pilots on the PTF;
 - Monthly flying activity reporting requirements;
 - Operational restrictions requiring compliance with CASA-accepted risk assessments and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- CASA implemented a more rigorous PTF assessment process, including detailed review of:
 - Safety risk assessments;
 - Pilot qualifications and licensing;
 - Aircraft maintenance personnel qualifications;
 - Verification of the aircraft Certificate of Airworthiness with CASA Australia.
- CASA required and reviewed comprehensive environmental risk assessments, hazard registers and SOPs before issuing the PTF.
- Monthly operational reports demonstrate compliance with the PTF conditions throughout the crop-spraying season.
- CASA has also established documented PTF issue procedures to standardise and continuously improve oversight of specialised low-level aerial application operations.

Collectively, these actions address the deficiencies identified by the investigation by:

- introducing operational parameters specific to low-level aerial application operations;
- requiring safety conditions tailored to agricultural spraying activities; and
- strengthening pilot qualification, operational vetting and regulatory oversight before authorisation is granted.

AIC assessment to Civil Aviation Safety Authority Response

The AIC has assessed the CASA response to AIC Safety Recommendation *AIC 26-R02/25-1002* and notes that the corrective action taken has fully addressed the safety deficiency identified in the AIC investigation. The AIC has assigned a fully satisfactory rating.

The AIC has recorded the Status of the AIC Recommendation: **CLOSED RESPONSE ACCEPTED**


Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner

31 August 2026