LIMITED OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT – FINAL

Reference Number	CA18/3/2/1522						
Classification	Serious Incident	**Date**	17 January 2026	**Time**	1555Z		
Type of Operation	Aerial Work Operations (Part 137)						
Location							
Place of Departure	Porterville Airstrip, Western Cape Province	Place of Intended Landing	Darling Cellar Airstrip, Western Cape Province				
Place of Occurrence	On the grass runway at Darling Cellar Airstrip, Western Cape Province						
GPS Co-ordinates	Latitude	33° 25' 56.31" S	Longitude	018° 31' 12.76" E	Elevation	118 ft	
Aircraft Information							
Registration	ZS-TAN						
Make; Model; S/N	Air Tractor; AT-802A (Serial Number: 802A-0193)						
Damage to Aircraft	Minor	Total Aircraft Hours	2 510.6				
Pilot-in-command							
Licence Type	Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL)	Gender	Male	Age	68		
Licence Valid	Yes	Total Hours	5191.3	Total Hours on Type	651.5		
Total Hours 30 Days	14.3	Total Flying on Type Past 90 Days	14.3				
People On-board	1+0	**Injuries**	0	**Fatalities**	0	**Other (on ground)**	0

What Happened

On Saturday afternoon, 17 January 2026, a pilot on-board the Air Tractor AT-802A aircraft registered ZS-TAN took off on a firefighting mission from Porterville Airstrip to an area in Atlantis that was ravaged by fire, with the intention to land at Darling Cellar Airstrip. Both airstrips are in the Western Cape. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) and under the provisions of Part 137 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

The pilot stated that the aircraft took off from Porterville Airstrip with a full load of water in the 800 US Gallons (3 028 litres [L]) hopper tank. After take-off, it climbed to 1 000 feet (ft), cruising at a speed of 160 knots (kts). Upon reaching the area in Atlantis that was ravaged by fire, he released the water and, thereafter, climbed and routed to Darling Cellar Airstrip to uplift a load of water. Upon reaching Darling Cellar Airstrip, he selected 30 degrees flaps in preparation to land on the grass-covered runway which was 1 000 metres (m) long. The aircraft's approached speed was 85 miles per hour (mph); it touched down in a three-point landing configuration. During the landing roll, the pilot retracted the flaps to allow the aircraft's weight to settle on the landing gear and this is when a strong gust of wind blew from the left (of the aircraft). Consequently, he lost directional control which resulted in the aircraft veering off to the left of the runway. To resolve this anomaly, he applied full right rudder and maximum braking to recover the aircraft, but without success.

The aircraft exited the runway and entered a shallow ditch which caused it to oscillate on the main landing gear. It was during this time that the right-wing tip touched the ground. Later, the pilot taxied the aircraft back to the runway; the ground speed was down to a walking speed. After stopping at the water-loading area, he was informed of the damage on the right-wing tip by the person on the ground. He then shut down the engine and assessed the damage. The flight duration was 1.1 hour.

A post-flight inspection revealed dents on the right-wing tip trailing edge as well as chafing marks on the outer right-side flap bracket. Minor damage was also observed on the right-wing tip upper surface and trailing edge. The pilot was not injured.

Figure 1: Chafing on the right-wing outer flap bracket (red arrow). (Source: Operator)

Figure 2: Dents on the right-wing tip trailing edge. (Source: Operator)

Air Tractor AT-802A Description (Source: https://at802f.com/aircraft-overview/aircraft-equipment/)

The Air Tractor AT-802A has a Pratt & Whitney PT6A-67AG 1350 turboprop engine. The aircraft is fitted with a 5-blade constant speed reversing Hartzell propeller. It has an 800 US gallons fiberglass hopper. The aircraft is fitted with computer-controlled rotary- actuated fire gate doors to provide a constant flow rate for drops. It has 11.0-12 low-pressure tyres with dual 4-piston brakes and electrically operated high-lift flaps. The aircraft has the maximum crosswind component of 20 miles per hour (mph) / 17 knots.

The weather information below was obtained from the pilot via the pilot questionnaire form number CA12-03.

Wind Direction	Westerly	Wind Speed	15kt	Visibility	+10km
Temperature	27°C	Cloud Cover	Nil	Cloud Base	Unknown
Dew Point	Unknow	QNH	Unknown		

Findings

Man

1. The pilot had a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 26 January 2012. The CPL was reissued on 27 February 2025 with an expiry date of 28 February 2026.

2. The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 25 November 2025 with an expiry date of 31 May 2026. The pilot's medical certificate listed the following restrictions: period of validity of the medical certificate (TML) and correction for defective near vision (VNL).

3. The aircraft type was endorsed in the pilot's licence. The pilot had a total of 5.191.3 flying hours of which 651.5 hours were accrued on the aircraft type.

Machine

4. The aircraft had a Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) that was issued by the Regulator on 22 November 2024 with an expiry date of 21 November 2025. The Regulator registered the aircraft under the current owner on 8 November 2023.

5. The aircraft's last mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) was conducted on 12 June 2025 at 2 471.2 total airframe hours after which a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) was issued with an expiry date of 11 June 2026 or at 2 571.2 airframe hours, whichever comes first.

6. The MPI of the aircraft was certified by an aircraft maintenance organisation (AMO) with an AMO Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 14 March 2024 and expiring on 14 March 2026.

7. The pilot reported that the aircraft had no pre-occurrence mechanical malfunctions or failures that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause(s)

Loss of directional control of the aircraft during the landing roll at Darling Cellar Airstrip.

Contributing Factor(s)

None.

Safety Action(s)

None.

Safety Message and/or Safety Recommendation/s

None.

About this Report

The decision to conduct a limited investigation is based on factors including whether the cause is known and the evidence supporting the cause is clear, the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation and that will determine the scope of an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited investigation has been conducted, and the Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) has relied on the information submitted by the affected person/s and organisation/s to compile this limited report. The report has been compiled using information supplied in the initial notification, as well as from follow-up desktop enquiries to bring awareness of potential safety issues to the industry in respect of this occurrence, as well as possible safety action/s that the industry might want to consider in preventing a recurrence of a similar occurrence.

All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.

Purpose

In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011 and ICAO Annex 13, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.

Disclaimer

This report is issued by:

Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa