

**INTERIM STATEMENT**

The information provided herein is of an interim nature. Readers are advised that new information may become available that may alter this interim statement prior to the publication of the final report.

1. The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is conducting a safety investigation into a fire bombing flight involving ZS-TBW Air Tractor AT802 which flew into terrain on 15 September 2014 at 1520B near Piet Retief Airfield.
2. The investigation is being conducted in accordance with the international protocol set out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The investigation team includes Investigator In-Charge (IIC) from the South African Civil Aviation Authority.

**History of flight**

- a) On 15 September 2014 ZS-TBW was involved in fire bombing at Piet Retief area farm (Mondi Vrede). According to the eye witness who was a pilot flying another aircraft that was also involved in fire-bombing in the same area stated that he was following ZS-TBW as a number two on a fire bombing run-in and had him visual at all times.
- b) He saw ZS-TBW running in to drop his load approximately half way up the right flank of the fire. The load of water did not come out and he collided with the trees ahead of him. The trees severed his right wing, he pitched up and rolled over inverted with nose dropping to the ground. He hit the ground at an angle of 70°.
- c) The aircraft then flipped over and nose face back to the direction he came from. There was no visible fuel leak except for the burst of water as he hit the ground. The wind direction was North Easterly and cloud and visibility was ok with maximum temperature of 32°C. There was no pre or post fire erupted after the aircraft hit the ground. The aircraft was completely destroyed.
- d) The pilot was fatally injured as a result of the accident. The search and rescue initiated and the emergency services responded to the scene. Further bombing was cancelled and the aircrafts returned to base.



Figure1 Shows the position of the wreckage



Figure 2: Shows the condition of the engine as found on the scene.

## Findings

3. Although the investigation is ongoing, the following findings have been made:
  - 3.1 The pilot was qualified and licenced for the flight in accordance with regulatory procedures and he had a valid aviation medical certificate. The pilot did not have any medical condition that prevented him from flying the aircraft on the day of the accident.
  - 3.2 The aircraft was equipped and maintained in accordance with the regulatory procedures by the approved AMO.
  - 3.3 There was no distress signal that was transmitted by ZS-TBW prior to the impact.

- 3.4 During the run-in the aircraft that was following the ZS-TBW did not see the load being dropped off and shortly after that ZS-TBW collided with the trees and they severed the right wing.

## **Recommendations**

- 4.1 There is no safety recommendation that has been issued by the AIID yet.

## **Conclusions**

- 5.1 The AIID investigation is on-going and we will be looking into other aspects of this accident which may have safety implications.

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