

No. 15

TransAir Limited, Norseman V, CF-BSL, crashed about 17 miles south of Chesterfield Inlet, North West Territories, on 31 January 1958.
Report released by the Department of Transport, Canada. Serial No. 58-3.

Circumstances

The aircraft departed North Rankin, N. W. T. at 1440 hours on a non-scheduled flight to Chesterfield Inlet with a pilot, 2 Eskimos and freight on board. At 1455 low cloud and airframe icing were encountered. The pilot altered the aircraft's heading toward the coastline of Hudson Bay and when over the coastline, turned left in an attempt to reach Chesterfield Inlet. However, the pilot decided to land the aircraft at the first opportunity and, at about 1505 hours, struck the snow-covered ground during "whiteout" conditions.

The wreckage was found by an RCMP constable on his annual patrol about 30 minutes after the accident occurred. The aircraft was demolished, and the four occupants were seriously injured.

Investigation and Evidence

A Certificate of Airworthiness had been issued for the aircraft. The wreckage of the aircraft was not examined as the ice on which the aircraft crashed drifted out into Hudson Bay.

The pilot-in-command held a valid Commercial Pilot Licence and had accumulated a total of about 2 051 hours of flying experience of which about 319 hours had been acquired on Norseman type aircraft. About 96 hours had been flown during the 90 days prior to the accident.

At the time of the accident a cold front, which was moving slowly southward, lay in an east-west line about 100 miles south of Chesterfield Inlet. An overcast layer of stratus cloud lay to the north of the front and snow was falling. The probable ceiling and visibility at the front were 500 to 1 000 ft and 1 to 3 miles respectively due to snow. Surface winds were north-northeast at 10 to 15 mph, and the surface temperature was 10° F. South of the front, ceilings were generally unlimited with good visibility.

There is frequently a lead of open water paralleling the west coast of Hudson Bay produced by the action of wind and tide. The saturated air over such leads produces fog which may at times extend to a height of 2 to 3 000 ft. Icing is usually severe in this cloud due to the supersaturated air. It is not known whether an open lead was present on the afternoon of 31 January 1958. However, if a lead was present then the northeast winds behind the front would bring the fog inland, producing near zero conditions and a serious icing hazard.

Probable Cause

The pilot continued VFR flight into unfavourable weather conditions and, in attempting to land, collided with the ground.