



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Separation issue due to runway incursion involving Gippsland Aeronautics GA-8, VH-BFL, and Cessna 210, VH-NLV

Mitchell Plateau ALA, Western Australia, 9 August 2016

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Aviation Occurrence Investigation
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Addendum

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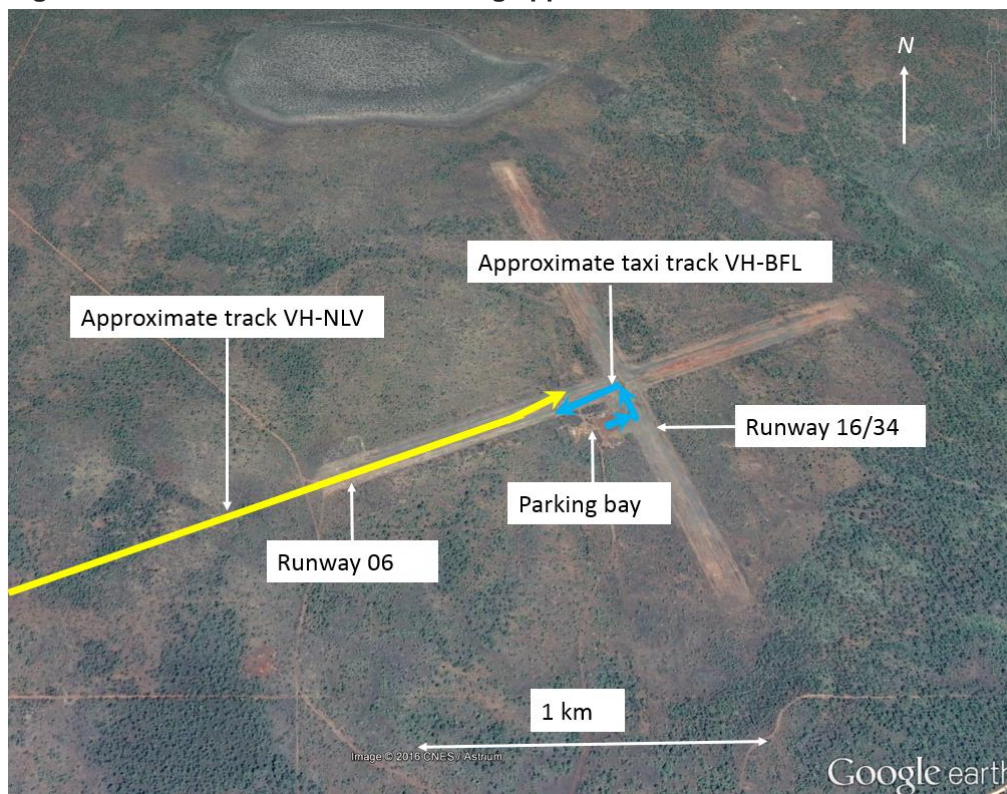
Separation issue due to runway incursion involving Gippsland Aeronautics GA-8, VH-BFL, and Cessna 210, VH-NLV

What happened

On 9 August 2016, at about 0930 Western Standard Time (WST), a Cessna 210N aircraft, registered VH-NLV (NLV), departed Kununurra Airport for a scenic charter flight to Mitchell Plateau aircraft landing area (ALA), Western Australia (WA), with a pilot and five passengers on board.

Shortly before 1100, after completing orbits overhead Mitchell Falls, about 9 NM south-west of Mitchell Plateau ALA, the pilot of NLV positioned the aircraft to track for a straight-in approach to runway 06 at Mitchell Plateau ALA (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mitchell Plateau ALA showing approximate aircraft tracks



Source: Google earth – annotated by ATSB

At that time, the pilot of a Gippsland Aeronautics GA-8 aircraft, registered VH-BFL (BFL), prepared to taxi at Mitchell Plateau ALA, for a scenic charter flight to Kalumburu, WA, with four passengers on board. Prior to taxiing, the pilot of BFL selected a company frequency on the aircraft’s radio and communicated with the pilot of another aircraft. After that communication, the pilot pressed the radio’s frequency select button in an attempt to switch to the North Kimberley common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF). However, the pilot did not detect at that time that the CTAF had not been selected and the radio remained tuned to the company frequency.

When about 5 NM from the ALA, the pilot of NLV broadcast on the CTAF, advising they were on a 5-mile final for runway 06 at Mitchell Plateau, and did not receive a response. When about 3 NM from the runway, the pilot of NLV sighted an aircraft (BFL) on the parking bay at the ALA, with the beacon on, indicating that the aircraft's engine was running.

The pilot of BFL reported that they broadcast a taxi call and a call advising that BFL was entering runway 16/34 to taxi to runway 06, and subsequently broadcast prior to entering runway 06 to backtrack to the runway threshold. The pilot inadvertently made those broadcasts company frequency instead of CTAF and did not receive any response.

When at about 1 NM on final approach to runway 06, the pilot of NLV broadcast again on the CTAF and did not receive a response. From the aircraft's position, the parking bay and adjacent taxiway were obscured by a line of trees, and the pilot was unable to see BFL.

As the pilot of NLV flared the aircraft for landing, they sighted BFL turn left and taxi onto runway 06. The pilot of NLV assessed that if they conducted a go-around the aircraft may be unable to climb fast enough to avoid the aircraft on the runway and could not diverge from the runway direction due to the trees beside the runway, therefore the pilot elected to land. After landing, the pilot of NLV braked more heavily than normal and moved to the left of the runway to increase the separation between the two aircraft.

As BFL entered runway 06 to backtrack, the pilot sighted NLV in the landing roll and also moved to their left. The pilots assessed that the aircraft passed within 2 m of each other at taxi speed and neither aircraft moved outside the runway strip. The aircraft were not damaged and no injuries were sustained.

Pilot comments

Pilot of VH-NLV

The pilot of NLV commented that during the flare, they considered conducting a go-around, but assessed that due to the high outside temperature, the aircraft may not have adequate climb performance to pass at a safe height above BFL.

Pilot of VH-BFL

The pilot of BFL had been in the airport terminal for about 2 hours before the incident. They commented that as the CTAF covered a large area, normally they would have very good awareness of other aircraft operating there. As they had not been listening to the radio during the time in the terminal, they were not aware of NLV. The pilot recalled looking for aircraft as they taxied onto runway 06, but did not see NLV.

The pilot also commented that due to a delay on the ground, they were keen to get away, and that may have contributed to not noticing that the radio was still on the company frequency.

Safety action

Whether or not the ATSB identifies safety issues in the course of an investigation, relevant organisations may proactively initiate safety action in order to reduce their safety risk. The ATSB has been advised of the following safety action in response to this occurrence.

Operator of VH-BFL

As a result of this occurrence, the operator of BFL has advised the ATSB that they are taking the following safety actions:

Flight crew briefing

The operator is proposing the following briefing for new flight crew regarding radio procedures:

- mentally confirm the required frequency

- visually confirm the required frequency is set as active, and the correct COM is selected on the audio panel
- aurally check by activating the squelch.

In addition, company pilots will be reminded to be mindful of the impact that stress (such as that due to delays) can have on their performance, to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress, and to return to the basics of good airmanship if/when they find themselves under stress and pressure.

Safety message

The ATSB SafetyWatch highlights the broad safety concerns that come out of our investigation findings and from the occurrence data reported to us by industry. One of the safety concerns is [safety around non-towered aerodromes](#).



Pilots are encouraged to prioritise their attention carefully and appropriately as they near non-towered aerodromes. An effective lookout for other aircraft, supported by communication with traffic in the vicinity, should be a high priority.

The ATSB report [Limitations of the See-and-Avoid Principle](#) outlines the major factors that limit the effectiveness of un-alerted see-and-avoid. Insufficient communication between pilots operating in the same area is the most common cause of safety incidents near non-controlled aerodromes.

Most occurrences reported to the ATSB at non-towered aerodromes involve conflicts between aircraft, or between aircraft and ground vehicles. In particular, active runways should be approached with caution. The ATSB publication [A pilot's guide to staying safe in the vicinity of non-towered aerodromes](#), stated that a large number of the conflicts between aircraft involved:

- ineffective communication between pilots operating in close proximity
- the incorrect assessment of other aircraft's positions and intentions
- relying on the radio as a substitute for an effective visual lookout
- failure to follow published procedures.

General details

Occurrence details

Date and time:	9 August 2016 – 1100 WST	
Occurrence category:	Incident	
Primary occurrence type:	Airspace – Aircraft separation – Issues	
Location:	Mitchell Plateau (ALA), Western Australia	
	Latitude: 14° 47.42' S	Longitude: 125° 49.55' E

Aircraft details: VH-BFL

Manufacturer and model:	Gippsland Aeronautics GA-8	
Registration:	VH-BFL	
Serial number:	GA8-06-107	
Type of operation:	Charter – Passenger	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 5
Injuries:	Crew – 0	Passengers – 0
Aircraft damage:	Nil	

Aircraft details: VH-NLV

Manufacturer and model:	Cessna Aircraft Company 210	
Registration:	VH-NLV	
Serial number:	21063093	
Type of operation:	Charter – Passenger	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 4
Injuries:	Crew – 0	Passengers – 0
Aircraft damage:	Nil	

About the ATSB

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory agency. The ATSB is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences; safety data recording, analysis and research; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The ATSB is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, marine and rail operations in Australia that fall within Commonwealth jurisdiction, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving Australian registered aircraft and ships. A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to operations involving the travelling public.

The ATSB performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* and Regulations and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

The object of a safety investigation is to identify and reduce safety-related risk. ATSB investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or determine liability. At the same time, an investigation report must include factual material of sufficient weight to support the analysis and findings. At all times the ATSB endeavours to balance the use of material that could imply adverse comment with the need to properly explain what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

About this report

Decisions regarding whether to conduct an investigation, and the scope of an investigation, are based on many factors, including the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited-scope, fact-gathering investigation was conducted in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.