



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Near collision involving Cessna 177, VH-OOJ, and Cessna 172, VH-VSO

20 km W of Ballarat, Victoria, 15 April 2016

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Addendum

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Near collision involving Cessna 177, VH-OOJ, and Cessna 172, VH-VSO

What happened

On 15 April 2016, the pilot of a Cessna 172 aircraft, registered VH-VSO (VSO), was conducting a solo navigation training flight from Ballarat to Warrnambool, Portland, Hamilton and return to Ballarat, Victoria.

On the same day, two pilots, both instructors, were conducting a local training flight in a Cessna 177RG aircraft, registered VH-OOJ (OOJ), from Ballarat Airport. At about 1648 Eastern Standard Time (EST), while tracking south-east about 12 NM from Ballarat Airport, and at about 3,800 ft, the pilot in command, who was the pilot-not-flying and in the left seat, sighted VSO out of the right window about 100 to 200 ft below. The pilot in command then took control of the aircraft from the other pilot and commenced a steep climb. VSO then passed beneath OOJ. Shortly after, the pilots of OOJ heard the pilot of VSO broadcast on the common traffic advisory frequency, 10 NM west of Ballarat and inbound to the airport.

The pilot of VSO reported that they could not recall their altitude when about 12 NM west of Ballarat, but would normally be between 3,500 and 4,500 ft on descent. The pilot reported scanning the sky to look out for other aircraft, and maintaining a listening watch on the area and Ballarat common traffic advisory frequencies. The pilot did not hear any broadcasts from the pilots of OOJ and did not observe any aircraft in close proximity during the flight.

Pilot comments

Pilot in command of VH-OOJ

The pilot in command of OOJ reported both pilots were maintaining a general lookout for other aircraft. However, at a moment when the other pilot was pointing to one of the aircraft instruments, the pilot in command sighted VSO out of the right window. The pilot in command commented that while it is important to understand the instruments during endorsement training, this should not detract from the lookout for other aircraft.

Operator comments

Operator of VH-OOJ

The operator of OOJ commented that Ballarat is a very busy training airport with the training area to the west. Therefore, if pilots of aircraft arriving from the west broadcast prior to 10 NM from the airport, this may increase the situational awareness of pilots of other aircraft in the training area.

Safety message

This incident highlights the importance of using both un-alerted and alerted see-and-avoid principles and maintaining a vigilant lookout at all times.

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-controlled aerodromes www.atsb.gov.au/safetywatch/safety-around-aeros.aspx.



Research conducted by the ATSB found that, between 2003 and 2008, 181 occurrences of reduced separation in the vicinity of non-towered aerodromes were reported, of which 55 were near mid-air collisions (aircraft proximity events). Insufficient communication between pilots and breakdowns in situational awareness were the most common contributors to safety incidents.

General details

Occurrence details

Date and time:	15 April 2016 – 1648 EST	
Occurrence category:	Serious incident	
Primary occurrence type:	Near collision	
Location:	20 km W of Ballarat Airport, Victoria	
	Latitude: 37° 28.58' S	Longitude: 143° 33.90' E

Aircraft details: VH-VSO

Manufacturer and model:	Cessna Aircraft Company 172S	
Registration:	VH-VSO	
Serial number:	172S10923	
Type of operation:	Flying training – Training solo	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 0
Injuries:	Crew – 0	Passengers – 0
Aircraft damage:	Nil	

Aircraft details: VH-OOJ

Manufacturer and model:	Cessna Aircraft Company 177RG	
Registration:	VH-OOJ	
Serial number:	177RG0857	
Type of operation:	Flying training – Training dual	
Persons on board:	Crew – 2	Passengers – 0
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.