

No: 2/84	INCIDENT	Ref: EW/G83/12/01
Aircraft type and registration:	Piper PA31 Navajo G-AYFZ (twin engine, business or commuter fixed wing aircraft)	
Year of manufacture:	1970	
Date and time (GMT):	10 December 1983 at 1240 hrs	
Location:	2 nm NW of Elstree Aerodrome	
Type of flight:	Flight Test	
Persons on board:	Crew — 1	Passengers — Nil
Injuries:	Crew — Nil	Passengers — N/A
Nature of damage:	Emergency escape hatch lost	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	45 years	
Commander's total flying experience:	1112 hours (of which 6 hours were on type)	

During climb-out from Elstree at an altitude of 1200 ft and an airspeed of 120 KIAS the emergency escape hatch suddenly departed the aircraft. The aircraft was not damaged by the hatch and landed without further incident. The hatch, which is located in the right hand side of the cabin has not been recovered.

Inspection of the aircraft reportedly revealed that with the hatch release lever in its fully locked position all four hatch retaining latches fitted in the fuselage were only partially extended. This had resulted from distortion in the mechanical linkage connecting the release lever with the latches. The hatch was last installed 3-12-83 following fitment of a new seal, and subsequently a number of flights were made before the hatch loss occurred. The Maintenance Manual requires inspection panels to be removed to enable correct latch position to be visually verified following hatch installation.