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Search Intensifies for Missing Aircraft in Snowy Mountains After Failing to Reach Destination

July 16, 2025

– Categories: General News



Emergency responders have launched an extensive search for a light plane that vanished after it failed to arrive at Moruya Airport on New South Wales' Far South Coast Tuesday afternoon. The aircraft had taken off from Wangaratta in north-east Victoria and was last tracked near Khancoban, a small town at the western base of the Snowy Mountains, according to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

The AMSA, along with Air Services Australia, confirmed that the plane disappeared from radar before reaching its intended destination. Authorities were alerted around 4:35 p.m. local time when the flight was declared overdue. Only one person was on board at the time of the incident, raising serious concerns for their safety given the rugged alpine conditions.

NSW Police believe the plane may have gone down near the Dargals Trail, a remote track deep within Kosciuszko National Park, an area known for steep terrain and challenging weather conditions. A coordinated response involving the NSW Police Alpine Operations Unit, Ambulance Services from both NSW and Victoria, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service has been underway since Tuesday evening.

Despite assistance from the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre's (JRCC) air unit, visibility issues and rough terrain have so far hampered progress. Snowfall and freezing temperatures have added another layer of complexity to the rescue operation. An AMSA spokesperson told ABC News the ground crews would continue navigating the mountainous landscape, though progress remains slow due to snowfall and difficult access points.

“The teams on the ground are facing incredibly tough conditions, snow-covered tracks, limited visibility, and dangerously cold temperatures,” the AMSA spokesperson added.

Search efforts resumed early Wednesday morning and were expected to extend into the evening hours. The aerial component of the search near Khancoban was temporarily called off just before 4:00 p.m. due to poor visibility, but is expected to resume as weather allows. Temperatures in the region hovered between 41 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit (5 to 10 degrees Celsius), with forecasts predicting further snowfall and temperatures as low as 34°F (1°C) overnight.

This incident highlights the unique challenges facing regional aviation in Australia, particularly when flights cross expansive wilderness or alpine regions where emergency response resources are stretched thin. While the search effort is being carried out professionally and with urgency, it serves as another reminder of the vital need for reliable aviation infrastructure and responsive emergency coordination, particularly in remote areas where resources are often under strain.

Authorities continue to urge anyone with potential information on the aircraft's whereabouts to contact NSW Police. Ground teams are expected to reinitiate the search at first light on

Thursday. As of now, no wreckage has been located, and the fate of the pilot remains uncertain.