Accident occurred on 13 july 1997 at Torreilles (66)
to the Robin DR 400-120 registred F-GDEK

f-ek970713a

Event:	Loss of control, collision with water.
Cause established:	Loss of visual references.

Consequences and damage:	Pilot killed, aircraft destroyed.
Type of aircraft:	Robin DR 400 - 120.
Date and time:	Sunday 13 July 1997 at 10 h 50.
Operator:	Club.
Place:	Torreilles (66).
Type of flight:	Local.
Persons on board:	Pilot.
Qualifications and experience:	Pilot aged 52, TT issued in 1979, 121 flying hours of which 108 on type 4 hours 40 in the previous three months.
Meteorological conditions:	AD Perpignan at 09 h 00 UTC: wind 090° / 08 kt, visibility 7 km, FEW at 2000 feet, temperature 24 °C. Port-Leucate at 09 h 00 UTC: wind north-north-east / 14 kt, visibility 6 km, OVC stratus at 1,000 feet, temperature 19 °C. Estimated at the site of the accident: wind 360° / 20 kt, visibility zero, fog, temperature 20 °C.

Circumstances

The pilot took off at 10 h 44. He was making a local flight despite the advice of the head of the aero club warning him about very bad meteorological conditions on the coast and encouraging him to just do a few runway circuits. The aircraft headed towards the north-east. At 10 h 48 the pilot announced that there was a lot of cloud at St Laurent and that he was heading towards Salses, information that was subsequently confirmed by the Perpignan approach control radar. At 10 h 49 he announced that he was « right in the clouds » and that he was descending to 500 feet. His speed, read out on the radar, went from 110 kt to 160 kt and his track heading changed to due east, towards the sea. Radar contact was lost at 10 h 51. A lot of corresponding witness testimony indicated that the airplane dived out of a layer of clouds before crashing into the sea 300 meters from the coast.

Radio communications between 10 h 44 and 10 h 52 show that two other aircraft were in difficulty because of the meteorological conditions. One of them was able to return to the aerodrome using a radar heading