

Kolyma, Indigirka, Yana, Lena and other rivers. Along with its other duties - serving the far-northern "Sever" expeditions, the polar stations and the regular job of transporting cargoes and passengers, the air brigade also carries out ice reconnaissance and guides sea-going ships in the ocean.

The experienced fliers accurately determine the thickness and strength of the ice, not only with the use of instruments, but also by its colour, fissures and by the amount of hummocking. Depending on these conditions, routes are established for ships. To the east, the brigade's fliers take ships "under their wing" off Chukotka and lead them to the Indigirka; in the west, they meet their ships off Severnaya Zemlya and Cape Kosisty and say goodbye to them off the Bering Strait. The fliers will note that a powerful north wind is driving the ice floes to the coast and they try to inform the ships' crews of the danger in time, so that the elements won't catch them unawares.

Operational information on the ice conditions helps save valuable resources. Once the sailors, following the advice of the hydrometeorologists, brought their convoy to the Yana and, via an open sea route, to the Indigirka earlier than usual and without being led by an icebreaker. As a result they were able to save half a million roubles.

"For the longest time they have been talking about the need for year-round shipping on the Northern Sea Route. In our sector of the Arctic, however, the shipping season, as always, lasts only