

Aviation directives prohibit flights of eight or more people over the sea: if it were necessary to make an emergency landing, the plane would go to the bottom in an instant. And we had this happen in the Dikson squadron. In January 1986 only the skillful actions of pilot V. Leber saved the lives of his passengers and crew. The place over the Kara Sea where the accident occurred is now marked on all the maps."

We can't forget to say something about the cargo-carrying capacity of the Mi-8. Often this helicopter transports little more than itself. It brings only five or six people to Srednii Island. Why? Simple. In flying along the shoreline of the Taimyr Peninsula, which means lengthening the route, pilots are forced to install additional fuel tanks inside the plane, thereby taking up more of the space in the cargo compartment and significantly increasing the weight of the plane. And this is going on at a time when people are forced to sit in airports for weeks waiting for a chance to get to their place of work. Cargo, that is being awaited impatiently by polar workers on remote islands isolated in the waters of the Arctic Ocean, lies idle for months. And there is yet another side to this coin. Aviation workers have to build additional onshore fuel depots, pay for ships to bring in fuel, maintain staff at the depots... As a result, the cost of flights increases and scarce kerosene is consumed - and how could there be too much of this fuel in the North?

At this point, of course, someone might object claiming that the Arctic will soon be getting the Ka-32 helicopters. This is true, but for the moment these aircraft are only found in Murmansk, and there are far too few of them. And besides, their operating cost is many times greater than that of the Mi-8. It will cost customers thousands, especially after the transition to market conditions. Or are people calculating that "half a loaf is better than no loaf at all"?

Why does the North need aviation? At first glance this may seem like a strange question, but it's a question that demands an answer. First of all, it is needed to transport cargo and passengers. Secondly, to support Arctic stations. Thirdly, to carry out airborne ice reconnaissance, and this information is critical to the safety of ships plying the Northern Sea Route. Fourthly, to perform all types of rescue operations.

"In the Arctic helicopters are needed with a heavy load-carrying capacity, with increased range, with more powerful engines," explains V. Kharin, taking a bunch of papers out of a desk in his office. "The most important is that they be able to 'swim'. But in response to our request Moscow keeps sending us the same answer: 'the design bureaus have been asked to develop this kind of technology.' But why develop it when the Ministry of Defence already has the Mi-14 helicopter? Pictures of it have been published several times in the magazine Morskoi flot (Maritime Fleet) in stories about rescue workers. It looks like the Mi-8, but unlike it the '14' can land on the water.