

Safety briefing before boarding a helicopter for a trip to oil platform, Indian Ocean (2005)

Situation: I was preparing to fly out to carry out some independent safety audits on two oil platforms in the Indian Ocean. There was a representative of the oil company - from their Safety Department - with me, to act as my 'minder'. We were flying to the platforms on a small, four seat helicopter.

The pilot arrived and the three of us left the terminal building and walked towards the helicopter. I realised there had been no pre-flight safety briefing – but I said nothing, thinking it would give me something to put in my audit report. (Pre-flight safety briefings are *de rigueur* in the North Sea.) However, my 'minder' must have noticed this also, and I saw him whispering something in the pilot's ear as we stood under the helicopter rotors.

Quite suddenly, the pilot turned to me and said "This helicopter is very safe, it is really very, very safe. There is nothing to worry about."

And that was my safety briefing!

Moral: Safety standards and expectations can differ widely between countries. The highest standards of safety look incongruous if applied in relatively poor countries with low life expectancy.