



Passenger Briefings

You can never assume a passenger knows about the safety features of your aircraft, even if they're labelled and you have a passenger briefing card.

Passenger safety briefings are essential. They're also mandated – rule 91.211 *Passenger briefing* outlines the requirements for all GA aircraft carrying passengers. The passenger briefing must cover what to do in flight, the location and use of exits, and the use of emergency equipment.

Ben Patterson, owner and chief pilot at Hokitika's Wilderness Wings, ensures his passengers are well informed.

"Our first safety briefing is in the office when people decide to go for a flight. That's where we cover dangerous goods, and our expectations for the operational area," he said.

"Once in the aircraft, passengers are told how to comply with the Civil Aviation Rules and Wilderness Wings requirements. We ensure they know how to operate their seat belts, and that they're not to touch the doors except in an emergency."

The consequences of a passenger accidentally turning the fuel shut-off valve or opening a door mid-flight can be dire, so it's crucial to alert them to such possibilities.

"It's also very important we tell them the location of safety equipment like the first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and axe. We then cover the use of the Emergency Locator Beacon, and tell passengers what to do in an emergency landing."

Even if a passenger is familiar with a type of airframe, there may be quirks specific to that aircraft.

"We fly a Cessna 206, and I've flown other Cessna 206s in which the location of emergency equipment has been completely different," says Ben.

Safety briefing cards

A passenger safety briefing card can be a valuable tool, providing not only a visual reference for the passenger, but also allowing them to read safety information at their own pace.

Safety information should also be easy to understand for everybody. Heliworks Queenstown Helicopters flies 8000 clients a year.

The General Manager, Richard Mills, says their safety briefing card is in Mandarin, Japanese, French, and German.

"If our clients are travelling with a tour guide, we ask that guide to do the safety briefing with us so nothing is missed, and the clients clearly understand what they must do to be safe around helicopters."

Helicopter briefings

The proximity of passengers to controls and rotor blades brings a special focus to passenger safety briefings for helicopter operators.

"There are considerable risks associated with clothing for example, and with passengers turning up with plastic bags. Procedures must be in place to deal with these issues, and pilots must be observant," says Grant Twaddle, CAA's helicopter operations team leader.

"Helicopters are noisy, and people have an inexplicable desire to hurry. Everything must slow down for a briefing."

Aside from the basics, it can also be helpful to offer tailored advice to passengers based on how they'll use the aircraft.

Richard Mills says whether it is a first flight for a tourist, or the passenger is well accustomed to flying in a helicopter, they receive the same briefing.

"We find that people who have more experience with helicopters can, at times, be as unpredictable in their behaviour as those who are taking their first helicopter flight."

Richard says if they have children flying with them, they emphasise to the parents how cautious they must be.

"We ask them to hold their child's hand while at the landing site, and keep a really good eye on them in the cabin during the flight."

Ben Patterson knows that incidents don't discriminate, and that consistency is the key.

"Whether you are flying your kids, or a prime minister; whether you're in a microlight, or a Cessna Caravan, it is extremely important for all pilots to give a good passenger briefing." ■

