Abstract On March 12, 2009, a Sikorsky S-92A helicopter travelling to two offshore oil installations crashed into the sea about 55 km away from the coastal city of St. John's in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada. It sank quickly with the loss of 17 lives. There was one survivor. The article examines the circumstances of the crash to assess the effectiveness of an instrumental, business case for safety and, by extension, for corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article fills a gap in the business and the management literature by adopting a qualitative, case study methodology to complement earlier, predominantly quantitative research. The study analyzes a comprehensive set of documentary data available from the offshore regulator's public inquiry website, including many days of verbatim testimony from the industry, the union, regulators, investigators, the lone survivor and families of the deceased, in addition to written submissions and expert reports. Investigatory reports from the Transportation Safety Board of Canada and the NL Inquiry were analyzed, as were regulatory documents and media coverage. Although offshore safety has improved since the Ocean Ranger disaster in 1982 (Wells http://www.cnlopb.nl.ca/ohsi_phase_one.shtml , 2010), the empirical evidence in this case study adds to our understanding of how reliance on a voluntary, instrumental business case for CSR in the absence of a normative concept of CSR is likely to fail, largely because of the existence of a powerful tension between oil exploration and production and investment in safety.

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- Authors
- Susan M. Hart, Faculty of Business Administration, Memorial University, St. John's, NL A1B 3X5, Canada

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