Erickson Air-Crane

In the early 1970s, logger Jack Erickson was pioneering a new way to transport logs out of forests—carrying them out by helicopter. Using a leased Sikorsky S-64E Skycrane, the civilian version of the Sikorsky Tarhe helicopter, he reinvented the Erickson Lumber Company as Erickson Air-Crane. Today, that company is the world's largest operator and manufacturer of S-64 Aircrane helicopters.

From its start in logging, Erickson Air-Crane developed specialty applications in cargo transport and construction. In 1975, the company put in place the seven-ton steel sections that made up the antenna of the CN Tower in Ontario, the world's tallest freestanding structure at the time. In the 1980s, in just four days, Erickson moved 1,100 tons of construction equipment and supplies to the remote mountain region of Quartz Hill, Alaska. And in 1993, the U.S. capitol architect contracted with Erickson to remove and replace the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol Dome during its renovation.

In the 1990s, Erickson arranged with the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation to become the manufacturer and support facility for all S-64 parts and components, and the helicopter's name was officially changed to the S-64 Aircrane. Erickson developed a 2,650-gallon tank attachment for the Aircrane and introduced other technology that has improved the effectiveness of aerial firefighting. Most recently, Erickson established an Aircrane Incident Response Systems (AIRS) program, which makes Aircranes available for the transportation needs associated with homeland security and emergency response.

In 2009, Erickson Air-Crane moved its corporate offices to Portland. Erickson still maintains facilities in Central Point, where a staff of 500 provide manufacturing, maintenance, repair, and engineering support for the S-64 Aircrane worldwide, which includes its own fleet of nearly 20 Aircranes, Erickson’s subsidiaries in Canada, Malaysia, and Europe, and Aircranes sold to the governments of Italy and Korea.

Written by Edwin Battistella

Further Reading:

Erickson Air-Crane Incorporated. "History." http://www.ericksonaircrane.com/history.php

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