

BY JENNIFER FERRERO AND LYN BURKS



**ERICKSON INC. CELEBRATES  
50 YEARS IN BUSINESS**  
AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN  
AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURING  
AND AERIAL OPERATIONS



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The employee commitment at Erickson Inc. is like that of a great sports team. The employees are the athletes, the coaches, and even the fans. The term “bad ass” is thrown around amongst employees. They proudly display the company colors and act upon the company culture with personal commitment. In 50 years of business, Erickson has become legendary as an original equipment manufacturer (OEM), maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) operation, and aerial services company.

A common phrase heard among Erickson employees is “bleeding orange,” which demonstrates the team’s tenaciousness and drive for safety and service. With nearly 800 employees working worldwide, they strive to save both people and property through aerial firefighting and defense missions, while also accomplishing civil aviation services with heavy-lift helicopters. They do this with capable hands and an eye on the mission.

The cornerstone of the company is aerial firefighting with the S-64 Air Crane® helicopter, but Erickson offers many other important industrial and lifesaving services.

If there was ever a mission as serious as that of military operations, it would be the work that Erickson does on a day-to-day basis in countries like the United States, Greece, Italy, Korea, and Australia.

Like most companies, Erickson Inc. has had its ups-and-downs. They’ve had to fight for principles while driving through market restrictions and competition. They’ve had to prove their mettle repeatedly on the world stage. After 50 years, Erickson has had a few bumps and bruises, but it has withstood the challenges and has grown to thrive. The future is coming — and it’s orange.



## LAUNCHING THE COMPANY IN 1971

Jack Erickson, founder of Erickson Air-Crane (now known as Erickson Incorporated) was born into a family of entrepreneurs. Erickson’s father owned a logging company. With family roots in logging, Jack Erickson was determined that there should be a better way to log mountaintops. In 1969, Erickson started talking with his friend Wes Lamatta about establishing a timber harvesting pilot program using helicopters with the U.S. Forest Service. (Lamatta later founded Columbia Helicopters.) They thought that helicopters would be the best way to access the land and off-load the massive logs. Erickson started with a Sikorsky S-61 on a lease, and then started using the Sikorsky CH-54 Skycrane helicopter, and Lamatta used the Boeing 234 Chinook, a large tandem, rotor-wing helicopter.



1964 | CH-54A with the 478th Aviation Company at Fort Benning, GA





Erickson bought a Skycrane, and then one more for the logging business. Billy Johnson, chief engineer at Erickson Inc., has been with the company for 16 years. "They pioneered that thing," he said about Erickson and Lamatta creating heli-logging.

According to Johnson, once Jack Erickson found out that Sikorsky was no longer going to support their aircraft, he said, "You are going to support me with parts, or sell me the type certificate so that I can do it myself." Decades later, in 1992, he obtained the type certificate from Sikorsky for the Skycrane. He later renamed the aircraft as the S-64 Air Crane® helicopter.

Erickson Air-Crane was founded in 1971 with the intention of adding power line construction and aerial firefighting. Fast forward to today, Johnson says, "We are an OEM and repair station, and also an operator. These are three things that don't necessarily go together, but we do them."



1989 in Mount Washington Alpine Resort, Vancouver Island, BC.

A large orange Bambi Bucket is being lowered by a helicopter. The bucket is filled with water and is being dropped into a body of water, creating a large splash. In the background, another helicopter is visible, also carrying a bucket. The scene is set against a backdrop of a forested area.

# Bambi Bucket System

40 YEARS OF INNOVATION

The Bambi Bucket logo features a stylized orange bucket icon next to the text "Bambi BUCKET" and "Driven by Innovation". To the right is a large "40" graphic, with the "4" in orange and the "0" in white with an orange outline.

**BAMBIBUCKET.COM**



# ERICKSON'S CURRENT SERVICES

Today's business is robust and diverse. Here are Erickson Inc.'s four areas of business and their subsectors:



Chris Erickson, senior quality manager (no relation to Jack Erickson) has been with the company since 1981. He said that the business “evolved over decades by being an operator, then maintainer, then type-certificate holder; and then a support organization for the S-64 Air Crane® helicopter, worldwide.” The senior quality manager shared that a milestone for the company happened when Jack Erickson developed the fire tank in 1992 for aerial firefighting. He said that it was the first rotorcraft with a fire tank.

Chris Erickson has stayed with the company for 40 years and watched its evolution. Why has he worked so long for Erickson? “It is the people. I enjoy the challenges; there is always something new.”

He added that there has been immense pride in accomplishments over the years: “The construction work, the development of the fire tank, the sale of aircraft internationally, the support of the aircraft, along with worldwide recognition by international governments – (it) has been impressive.”







# COMPANY CULTURE

The company's culture is emphasized repeatedly by employees. There is something unique about it that keeps employees from leaving, even though there has been some turbulence with the business going public, going back to being privately held, and going through bankruptcy. Through it all, Erickson employees continued to innovate and grow markets.

Jeff Mecklenburg, Erickson Inc.'s vice president of AeroSystems, said about the company's culture, "(It's) a get-it-done culture – tenacious and gritty. We always find a way to get things done." He added that when the company moved into becoming an OEM and added support services, they were at a milestone again. He cited the purchase of the type certificates from Sikorsky and the decision to sell aircraft.

He said, "There is a loyalty to the aircraft in the field. Bleeding orange for me is to do anything for the company, anytime; get it done." After 24 years with Erickson Inc., he also said that the people are the reason he stays. He enjoys the unique work that the company does with the Air Crane helicopter, from moving rhinos in Malaysia to delivering snow to the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics.

A common theme heard from employees is that they enjoy showing up to work every day because of the people they work with and the work they do. Amanda Hammersmith, blade shop manager, said, "When you actually work for a company that saves lives, that's pretty amazing."



2010 | Delivering snow to the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, B.C.



2010 | Erickson works with SpaceX

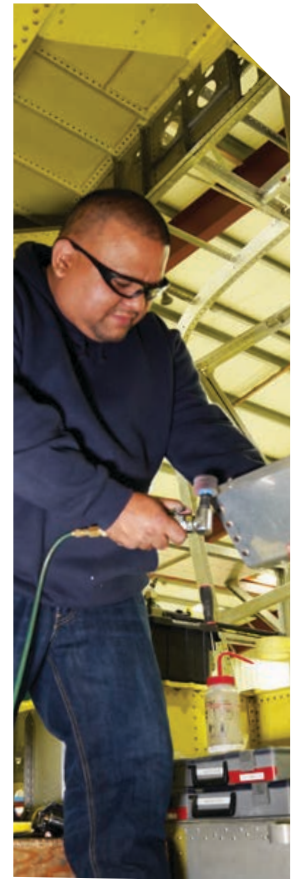




# TYPE CERTIFICATES AND LEGACY SUPPORT

Erickson has developed legacy fleet support since 1992. The early purchase of the Sikorsky type certificate in 1992 for the Skycrane (later dubbed the S-64 Air Crane®) helicopter was just the beginning. Most recently in 2020, [Erickson purchased the type certificates from Bell for the 214 B/B1 and](#)

[214ST](#). Owning the type certificates means that Erickson can manufacture parts, maintain the aircraft, and create new aircraft as an OEM. Owners and operators of these aircraft can come to Erickson for support.



2021 | Maintenance and repair on I-CFAG prior to delivering to VVF in Italy