

U.S. AFA ROTOR EVALUATIONS



Source: Erickson

“Reliable product performance is critical to operator safety, mission success, and the health of our business.

FirstLink identified the opportunity for us to leverage the expertise, facilities and equipment of the Air Force Academy in order to swiftly address our development needs. We are pleased to currently provide a real world experience for the Academy’s Cadets by adding to their science and engineering studies.

***Dale Roberts
Erickson Air-Crane, Inc.***

Helicopters produced by Erickson Air-Crane, Inc. have long been used for fire suppression (including the 2007 California inferno), disaster recovery, and search & rescue operations at both low and high altitudes. Their proven value in critical missions since the Vietnam era has enabled them to retain an important position in U.S. military and other air fleets. The company has recently introduced modifications to the helicopter’s rotor and is further certifying new manufacturers for spare parts that have not been in production since the 1960’s.

A Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) has been established between Erickson and the U.S. Air Force Academy (AFA) with the assistance of both FirstLink and Michael Crane of AFA’s Office of Technology Applications. Scott Fawaz, Director at the Academy’s Center for Aircraft Structural Life Extension, notes the laboratory’s access to a large fatigue testing pool available in the time frame needed to evaluate the first new parts in a relevant environment made the AFA the perfect partner. The rotor testing activity was one of the first assignments on a particular testing apparatus at AFA, creating a learning experience regarding the testing platform itself.

The goal of this CRADA is to certify that a stream of replacement parts conform to original design and performance specifications. This will allow the owners of Erickson helicopters to minimize fleet investments and enjoy greater longevity for existing helicopters used for first responder applications.

The Air Force Academy mission is to educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation. As part of the academic program, faculty and cadets conduct research and consulting for Air Force agencies.

FirstLink is the Department of Defense’s National Center of Excellence for First Responder Technologies, supporting first responder needs through the development of commercial pathways between Department of Defense Science & Technology, private industry and universities.

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