

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ERICKSON S-64 FAA CERTIFIED FOR NVG OPERATIONS

NEW INTEGRATED NVG PROGRAM OFFERS INVALUABLE OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY WHILE PRIORITIZING SAFETY

PORTLAND, Ore. – An Erickson Incorporated S-64F Air Crane® helicopter was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for night vision goggle (NVG) operation on April 6, 2023. The approval is a key component of Erickson's integrated NVG program, which aims to offer customers increased flexibility and expanded operational capabilities. This added proficiency presents the opportunity for increased tactical planning and agility in aerial firefighting and a variety of civil protection operations.

NVG Program Milestones

Erickson partnered with Aviation Specialties Unlimited (ASU) to modify an S-64F to perform NVG operations. Concurrently, Erickson pilots received NVG training and certification through ASU. Aircraft modifications and pilot certifications were completed in March, with FAA aircraft certification in April.

A critical element of Erickson's NVG program is ensuring that the NVG flight crew maintain currency in accordance with current FAA regulations, though it is the policy of the Erickson training department that pilots exceed the FAA's minimum requirements to maintain a high level of proficiency. Erickson conducted NVG training in accordance with this policy at its annual spring training event in Oregon.

As part of the currency flights, prior to conducting operational training, flight crews completed Helicopter Night Vision Goggle Operations (HNVGOS), in accordance with the FAA regulations. Upon completion of those activities, the flight crews initiated their Night Fire Fighting training. During the training, they performed a variety of drops using multiple coverage level options. A variety of filling techniques performed in the S-64 included ground fill, Pond Snorkel hover release into an open water source, hover fill, as well as tank fill operations.

This was a multi-agency event, with the FAA and U.S. Forest Service on-site, observing the training. In addition, the Crook County Fire Department was also on site, providing ground fill for the S-64 tank and simultaneously conducting required helicopter coordination training and signoffs.

Regarding Erickson's NVG capabilities, ASU Director of Operation Tony Tsantles commented, "I had the pleasure of working with Erickson pilots personally; they are professional and prepared to conduct operations around the clock now. That is exciting, not just for themselves, but for their supported customers as well!"



Erickson NVG night firefighting training with multi-agency coordination. Photo courtesy of Crook County Fire Department.

Program Development

Erickson's approach to the NVG program development demonstrates the company's "safety-first" mentality. Program participants were able to operate outside of a fixed timetable, which resulted in the removal of any perceived pressures and allowed for optimal coordination, planning, and risk mitigation.

Erickson's Director of Operations, Ray Touzeau, commented on the development of the NVG program: "Safety is the first and foremost aspect of the NVG training program. Erickson's goal is always to be the master of our craft, with safe and effective operations being the marker of success." Touzeau also explained that risk mitigation strategies such as employing extensive training and following detailed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), regulatory protocols, and procedures will be paramount in achieving NVG safety and performance objectives.

The Future of Erickson's NVG Operations Program

Erickson's recent dedication to developing a comprehensive NVG program is fueled by feedback from long-term customers, coupled with a commitment to remain at the forefront of aerial firefighting technology and current industry trajectories.

Touzeau commented, "Erickson's historical strategy has been to ask customers what they want, and then work with them to make it happen. Our goal with the NVG program will be to continue implementing the program, while soliciting customer feedback to determine where potential for enhancement exists."

Armed with customer feedback, Erickson plans to continue exploring additional strategies, integrations, and technologies to enhance competencies and optimize situational awareness in all operations, to include the NVG program.

ABOUT ERICKSON

Erickson Incorporated, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, USA, is the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of the S-64 Air Crane® heavy-lift helicopter and a Tested and Trusted® global provider of aviation services specializing in aerial firefighting, civil protection, and defense. Since 1971, Erickson has operated and modernized the global fleet of S-64 aircraft and supported operators of a variety of airframes with vertically integrated manufacturing, Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO), and augmented support in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

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