

# Air Tanker Contractor Looking for a Few Good Vets

Michael Archer | July 23, 2010

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Although there are a number of fixed-wing air-tanker contractors working with fire agencies across the country, there are also large employers -- looking for veterans -- who field fleets of rotary-wing air-tankers. One of the largest is Oregon-based Erickson Air-Crane.

The huge helicopters employed by this organization are multi-role aircraft that are used to fight fires, as well as for construction, logging, and cargo-hauling worldwide.

"Construction keeps us busy, mainly with transmission towers in the U.S.," said Dennis Hubbard, program manager for Aircrane Incident Response Systems.

"Wind power is a big market area that we continue to explore and we've had some success building wind turbines at wind farms. The next big project is a wind farm being built in Spain, where they're building 14 turbines," he added.

In addition to Spain, Erickson developed very unique equipment that's used at other overseas locations for various reasons.

"In 2000, we started selling our aircraft's firefighting capabilities overseas ... to fight fires near coastal areas, which meant the aircraft had to have the ability to fill with saltwater. So we needed to find a way to fill up without clogging up the engines with salt spray, and we developed the Sea Snorkel," Hubbard said proudly. "This one innovation allowed for widespread utilization in Europe for firefighting."

What's more, Erickson looks for former military personnel to operate these complicated aircraft, and many employees are veterans.

"When I was hired on, there were only two civilians in Erickson for years [everybody else being vets]," said Kenny Chapman, Erickson's lead pilot with 31 years of experience. "Now at least 50 percent are vets."

Hubbard, who is also a veteran, served with the Air Force as a medic. He advises that any veteran who wants to work with Erikson, have an A&P certificate. However, Hubbard made it clear that prior service "translates well into civilian certifications."

## ABOUT MICHAEL ARCHER



Michael Archer is a wildfire consultant and writer. He has written articles for *Home and Fire Magazine*, *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*, and other publications, lectured to many groups about fire issues, been quoted by Associated Press and USA Today reporters, and also appeared on cable and network TV discussing wildfire issues. Currently, he is acting as webmaster and technical consultant to Wildfire Research Network ([www.wildfireresearch.org](http://www.wildfireresearch.org)), a Los Angeles-based citizens' action group that promotes firefighting issues involving the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

His "Firebombers Incorporated" series of novels gives readers an intriguing "what-if" scenario on how 21st century technology could modernize the wildland firefighting force. His novel "Firestorm," received excellent reviews from *Writers Digest*, *The Nashville News*, *The VVA Veteran* (Vietnam Veterans of America's magazine) and firefighting professionals across the United States. His company, Firebomber Publications, donates 50 percent of net profits to organizations that support the families of injured and fallen firefighters.



You can visit his website at: [www.firebomberpublications.com](http://www.firebomberpublications.com)

Firestorm can be purchased at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

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So how do job applicants prepare for a job with Erickson? Chapman advises that prospective employees learn flight ops in addition to taking A&P classes, and "get long-line [more than 100 feet] experience."

"And get experience with different helicopters, like a Jet Ranger, this all helps, as does seismic work, as well as moving drill rigs, and logging," added Chapman.

"Another issue we've run into is that the military doesn't do that much vertical reference work like the civilian world," he added. "There are some companies out there that are starting courses on professional pilots in the wildfire environment for people who have never been in it."

What do Erickson employees see in their future? "We've got more and more aircraft transitioning into construction, which is what I see as the future for this aircraft," said Chapman. "I think that's been under-marketed and under-utilized the entire time."

And as a result, they're hiring. "Now we've got several hundred people to support manufacturing."

If you're interested in more information on this topic, visit Erickson Air-Crane at [www.ericksonaircrane.com](http://www.ericksonaircrane.com).

Visit Military.com's [Veteran Job Board](#) to find more jobs in the fire service.

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